SERMONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN YEAR ✣

ASCENSION DAY TO ADVENT

Dr. A. G. Mortimer

THE CHURCH'S LESSONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year.

BEING

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY SERMONS.

VOL. II.

THE ASCENSION DAY TO THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT.

BY THE REV.

ALFRED G. MORTIMER, D.D.,

RECTOR OF S. MARK'S, PHILADELPHIA.

AUTHOR OF "HELPS TO MEDITATION," "WHO COMES?" "SPIRITUAL LIFE IN THE SEVEN LAST WORDS," "LENTEN PREACHING," ETC.

London:

SKEFFINGTON & SON,

34, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, W.C.

PUBLISHERS TO HIS MAJESTY THE KING.

1905.

Contents.

PAGE

LXI.—DANIEL'S VISION ... ... (*The Ascension Day*) 1

DANIEL VII. 13, 14.

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

LXII.—THE REIGN OF BLESSING ... (*The Ascension Day*) 6

S. LUKE XXIV. 50, 51.

"And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His Hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven."

LXIII.—THE LAW OF GOD AND THE SOUL OF MAN (*The Sunday after Ascension Day*) 13

DEUTERONOMY XXX. 11, 14.

"For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. . . . But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

LXIV.—THE PURPOSE OF LIFE (*The Sunday after Ascension Day*) 19

S. JOHN XVII. 4, 5.

"I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

LXV.—THE FEAST OF PENTECOST ... ... (*Whitsunday*) 26

DEUTERONOMY XVI. 9, 10.

"Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn. And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy GOD with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the Lord thy GOD, according as the Lord thy GOD hath blessed thee."

PAGE

LXVI.—THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT ... ... (*Whitsunday*) 32

ROMANS VIII. 16, 17.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of GOD: and if children, then heirs; heirs of GOD, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

LXVII.—ISAIAH'S VISION ... ... (*Trinity Sunday*) 38

ISAIAH VI. 3.

"And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory."

LXVIII.—ALPHA AND OMEGA ... ... (*Trinity Sunday*) 43

REVELATION I. 8.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the Lord, Which is, and Which was, and Which is to come, the Almighty."

LXIX.—THE PASSAGE OF THE JORDAN (*The First Sunday after Trinity*) 49

JOSHUA III. 11.

"Behold, the Ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan."

LXX.—PROVIDENCE, CHANCE, OR FATE? (*The First Sunday after Trinity*) 55

ACTS VIII. 26.

"And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert."

LXXI.—JAEL ... ... (*The Second Sunday after Trinity*) 62

JUDGES IV. 21.

"Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground, for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died."

LXXII.—THE CONVERT'S QUESTION (*The Second Sunday after Trinity*) 68

ACTS IX. 6.

"And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

PAGE

LXXIII.—A MOTHER'S GIFT TO GOD
(*The Third Sunday after Trinity*) 74

1 SAMUEL II. 26.

"And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men."

LXXIV.—CORNELIUS, THE CENTURION
(*The Third Sunday after Trinity*) 80

ACTS X. 1, 2.

"There was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared GOD with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to GOD alway."

LXXV.—INTERCESSORY PRAYER
(*The Fourth Sunday after Trinity*) 86

1 SAMUEL XII. 23.

"Moreover as for me, GOD forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

LXXVI.—S. BARNABAS ... (*The Fourth Sunday after Trinity*) 92

ACTS XI. 24.

"For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

LXXVII.—SAUL ... ... (*The Fifth Sunday after Trinity*) 98

1 SAMUEL XV. 22.

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

LXXVIII.—TRIBULATION THE ENTRANCE TO HEAVEN
(*The Fifth Sunday after Trinity*) 105

ACTS XIV. 22.

"Exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of GOD."

LXXIX.—FRIENDSHIP ... ... (*The Sixth Sunday after Trinity*) 111

2 SAMUEL I. 26.

"I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

LXXX.—THE HOLY GHOST IN THE CHURCH
(*The Sixth Sunday after Trinity*) 117

ACTS XV. 28.

"For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us."

PAGE

LXXXI.—THE THRESHING-FLOOR OF ARAUNAH
(*The Seventh Sunday after Trinity*) 123

1 CHRONICLES XXI. 26.

"And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the Lord; and He answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering."

LXXXII.—THE BERŒANS AND THE ATHENIANS
(*The Seventh Sunday after Trinity*) 128

ACTS XVII. 11.

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

LXXXIII.—DAVID ... ... (*The Eighth Sunday after Trinity*) 134

1 CHRONICLES XXIX. 28.

"And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour."

LXXXIV.—THE STANDARD OF S. PAUL'S TEACHING
(*The Eighth Sunday after Trinity*) 139

ACTS XX. 26, 27.

"Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of GOD."

LXXXV.—THE QUEEN OF SHEBA
(*The Ninth Sunday after Trinity*) 146

1 KINGS X. 1.

"And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the Name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions."

LXXXVI.—A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE
(*The Ninth Sunday after Trinity*) 151

ACTS XXIV. 16.

"Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward GOD, and toward men."

LXXXVII.—THE SIN OF JEROBOAM
(*The Tenth Sunday after Trinity*) 157

1 KINGS XII. 28.

"Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

PAGE

LXXXVIII.—HEAVENLY VISIONS
(*The Tenth Sunday after Trinity*) 165

ACTS XXVI. 19.

"Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

LXXXIX.—ELIJAH'S CHALLENGE
(*The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity*) 171

1 KINGS XVIII. 21.

"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be GOD, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him."

XC.—RESPONSIBILITY FOR BAD EXAMPLE
(*The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity*) 178

S. MATTHEW XVIII. 7.

"Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

XCI.—AHAB'S MISUSE OF RELIGION
(*The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity*) 185

1 KINGS XXII. 8.

"And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

XCII.—THE LABOURER'S REWARD
(*The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity*) 191

S. MATTHEW XX. 13-16.

"But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"

XCIII.—NAAMAN AND THE CAPTIVE MAID
(*The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity*) 197

2 KINGS V. 2, 3.

"And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would GOD my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."

PAGE

XCIV.—CHRIST'S LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM
(*The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity*) 203

S. MATTHEW XXIII. 37.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

XCV.—THE LAW OF RETRIBUTION
(*The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity*) 209

2 KINGS IX. 25, 26.

"Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the Lord laid this burden upon him; surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the Lord; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the Lord. Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of the Lord."

XCVI.—THE FOOLISH VIRGINS
(*The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity*) 214

S. MATTHEW XXV. 8.

"Our lamps are going out."

XCVII.—HEZEKIAH'S TRUST IN GOD
(*The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity*) 219

2 KINGS XVIII. 5.

"He trusted in the Lord GOD of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him."

XCVIII.—THE GRADUAL GROWTH OF GRACE
(*The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity*) 225

S. MARK IV. 26-30.

"And He said, So is the kingdom of GOD, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

PAGE

XCIX.—THE EDICT OF CYRUS
(*The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity*) 231
2 CHRONICLES XXXVI. 22, 23.
"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia. All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord GOD of heaven given me; and He hath charged me to build Him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? The Lord his GOD be with him, and let him go up."

C.—WATCHFULNESS ... (*The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity*) 237
S. MARK XIII. 37.
"And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

CI.—A NATION'S DANGER
(*The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity*) 243
JEREMIAH V. 30, 31.
"A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and My people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

CII.—THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN
(*The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity*) 249
S. LUKE XIII. 20, 21.
"And again He said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of GOD? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

CIII.—JEHOIAKIM'S PENKNIFE
(*The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity*) 254
JEREMIAH XXXVI. 23.
"And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth."

CIV.—THE FINDING OF THE SOUL
(*The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity*) 260
S. LUKE XV. 8.
"Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?"

PAGE

CV.—NOAH, DANIEL, AND JOB
(*The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity*) 265
EZEKIEL XIV. 20.

"Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness."

CVI.—THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS
(*The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity*) 270
S. LUKE XIX. 20, 21.

"And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow."

CVII.—THE RESPONSIBILITY OF OFFICE
(*The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity*) 276
EZEKIEL XXXIV. 10.

"Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require My flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them."

CVIII.—NICODEMUS ... (*The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity*) 282
S. JOHN III. 1, 2.

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from GOD: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except GOD be with him."

CIX.—NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S IMAGE
(*The Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity*) 288
DANIEL III. 16-19.

"O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our GOD Whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

CX.—THE LIVING WATER
(*The Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity*) 294
S. JOHN VII. 37, 38.

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

PAGE

CXI.—DANIEL'S TRIAL (*The Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity*) 300

DANIEL VI. 10.

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his GOD, as he did aforetime."

CXII.—THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

(*The Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity*) 305

S. JOHN VIII. 12.

"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

CXIII.—THE FRUITS OF PENITENCE

(*The Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity*) 310

HOSEA XIV. 1.

"O Israel, return unto the Lord thy GOD."

CXIV.—THE MAN BORN BLIND

(*The Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity*) 316

S. JOHN IX. 6, 7.

"When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing."

CXV.—LIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

(*The Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity*) 321

AMOS III. 3.

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

CXVI.—THE GOOD SHEPHERD

(*The Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity*) 327

S. JOHN X. 14.

"I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine."

CXVII.—THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN

(*The Sunday next before Advent*) 332

ECCLESIASTES XII. 13. 14.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear GOD, and keep His commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For GOD shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."

PAGE

CXVIII.—A REVELATION OF CHRISTIAN LIFE (*The Sunday next before Advent*) 339

S. JOHN XVI. 33.

"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

CXIX.—THE DUTY OF GLEANING ... (*Harvest Festival*) 344

RUTH II. 8.

"Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens."

CXX.—THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL ... (*Foreign Missions*) 349

ROMANS I. 16.

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of GOD unto salvation to every one that believeth."

The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year.

Sermon LXI.

DANIEL'S VISION.

(The Ascension Day.)

DANIEL VII. 13, 14.

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

IN the Second and in the Seventh Chapters of the Book of Daniel we have two visions, which, though differing in imagery, evidently portray the same historical events and refer to the same four kingdoms which should precede and give place to the Kingdom of Christ. The first vision was seen by Nebuchadnezzar, the latter by Daniel himself. They are alike, in that in each vision the fourth kingdom is overthrown by a power altogether different from itself in origin and character.

I. Without entering upon the interesting, though comparatively unimportant, question concerning what kingdoms precisely are portrayed by the four beasts in the vision, we may observe that they all had a common origin and a common end. They came up from the sea as the result of the strife of the four winds of heaven upon the great sea. They originated, then, in strife and from the restless sea, which especially typifies the evil of this world; and they had a common destiny—that each was but transient and short-lived, that they gave place to one another, that they were judged by the Ancient of days, and that their dominion was taken away.

Still further, we may observe that they had a common character symbolized by the natures of the beasts themselves—a character of brutal violence and destructive force. All alike are devourers of flesh. And of the last we are especially told that it was "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly"; that "it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it." This suggests not only brute force and savage appetites, but wanton and wasteful destruction. All the kingdoms alike, then, are world-powers, winning their temporary ascendency by brute force; ruling, not for the good of their subjects, but for selfish ends, attained by sacrifice of life and infliction of suffering.

As each wins its ascendency by force, so each in turn yields to superior force. Thus it always is and always will be with the powers of this world, which are gendered in strife, and hold their supremacy only by might.

In striking contrast to these kingdoms is a fifth, which differs from them in origin, destiny and character. Its origin is from above, as theirs is from the deep below. It is the kingdom of a Son of Man, Who comes with the

clouds of heaven. Its King has, therefore, a twofold nature, human and divine. He is a Son of Man, but He comes with the clouds of heaven, with the symbols of divinity. Our Lord uses this image when, adjured by the high priest to say whether He was the Christ, the Son of God, He answers, "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."[1] There can, therefore, be no possible doubt in regard to the person or nature of this King. He is Man, but He is God. We may notice three titles bestowed upon our Lord in Holy Scripture—Son of David, Son of Man, and Son of God. The Son of David assures us that He was the Messiah promised to the Jews; the Son of Man tells us of His relation to the human race at large; the Son of God, of His relation to the Eternal Father Himself.

But if the origin and nature of this fifth kingdom differed entirely from those of the world powers which have been described, so also did its destiny and character. Their destiny was but transient; their dominion was taken away. Of Christ's Kingdom we are assured that it should be universal in its extent; for "all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him." Even the mightiest of the world's powers has its limits. Christ's Kingdom is without limit; all people are to serve Him. Again, it is everlasting in its duration. No world power retains its supremacy for more than a few generations; but of Christ's Kingdom we are told that it is "an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away," a "kingdom which shall not be destroyed."

But if it surpass every world power in dignity of origin, in universality of dominion, and in permanence of dura-

[1] S. Matt. xxvi. 64.

tion, it differs from them quite as much in character. The character of the world power is always selfish, generally tyrannical, often cruel. The world powers rule, not for the good of their subjects, but for their own glory or their own self-interests. The character of Christ's Kingdom is absolutely unselfish, for it is a kingdom of love; its King laid down His life to prove His love for His subjects; and His whole rule has but this one end—the happiness of His people.

Before we pass from this vision of Daniel there is one more point to which we must draw attention—the Sovereignty of God, as portrayed in the vision of the Ancient of days. Daniel says, "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened."

Without dwelling upon the marvellous imagery of this part of the vision, we may observe that, while the four world kingdoms go on apparently unchecked in their ruthless course, a record is being kept; God has books of judgment; a time of reckoning comes when the judgment is set, and the books are opened. This is not the judgment of the last day, but the judgment of these individual kingdoms as represented by the four beasts. Wicked and violent men seem to have their own way for a time; and yet God's Sovereignty is always vindicated in the end. It was the result of this judgment that their dominion was taken away, that the power which they had misused was withdrawn from them.

II. But why is this chosen as the lesson for Ascension Day? The reason is not far to seek. On Ascension Day the prophecy of Daniel was fulfilled. The Son of Man, having won His kingdom by toil and suffering and obedience in this world, comes on Ascension Day to the Ancient of days, is exalted to His Kingdom in heaven, His work is done on earth, and there *is* given to Him, *as the Son of Man,* "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Ascension Day tells us of the enthronement of our King. We have been following, step by step, His life on earth, from the humiliation of the Incarnation, through the work of His ministry, to its sad end, in rejection, suffering and death! And yet this was not its end; for on Easter Day He rose again, appeared to His Apostles, taught them the things pertaining to the Kingdom of GOD; and then, having promised to send them the Holy Ghost the Comforter to strengthen them and guide them, He ascends into heaven, to receive that Kingdom which shall know no end, that Kingdom which Daniel so wonderfully describes in his vision.

In this kingdom we have our share; for we are citizens of heaven, subjects of the Great King! How great are our privileges; and yet, how serious our responsibilities. The rule of our King is not grievous, it is always for our good; and yet, how often by our deeds we proclaim, "We will not have this Man to reign over us."[1]

The laws of that kingdom are founded upon principles of eternal righteousness; and yet how frequently we break

[1] S. Luke xix. 14.

those laws! The rewards of that kingdom, how great they are, even in this world; but how much greater in eternity! For the King, exhorting us to be faithful and earnest, has sent us this message, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His Throne."[1]

Sermon LXII.

THE REIGN OF BLESSING.

(The Ascension Day.)

S. Luke xxiv. 50, 51.

"And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His Hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven."

THE hands symbolize our actions, as the heart our affections, the head our thoughts, the tongue our words. And what are we told in the Gospels of our Lord's Hands?

I. We may notice three things:

1. First, the many times the evangelists record that our Lord laid His hands upon the sick and healed them. All our Lord's works were works of mercy and love, and a large number of them were performed by touching with the hand, or laying the hand upon the object of His compassion.

2. Then we read that those dear Hands of His were nailed to the Cross when He fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, "I have spread out My hands all the day unto a

[1] Rev. iii. 21.

rebellious people."[1] The outstretched arms and the pierced hands were His invitation to every soul of man to come to Him, that He might take them to His Heart and fold them in His embrace, that they might indeed be safe in the arms of Jesus.

3. And lastly at His Ascension we have our attention especially called to His Hands. In the second lesson to-day we are told that He led out His disciples as far as to Bethany, "and He lifted up His Hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Their last sight of Him was with hands uplifted in benediction.

And so we live under the benediction of those uplifted hands, under the reign of the blessings which flow from our ascended Lord, from our exalted King!

II. What are these blessings? S. Paul, quoting freely from the Psalms, and referring to our Lord's Ascension, says, "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."[2] The Psalm[3] from which these words are taken is a Psalm of triumph, celebrating the placing of the Ark of God in Zion, which was in itself a type of our Lord's Ascension. S. Paul adapts the words and explains them: "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

1. The first of these gifts, and the greatest—the one which made all the others possible—was the gift of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, the gift of the Comforter, Who should guide the Church into all truth, Who should teach the Church all necessary things, and bring to her remembrance all that Christ had said; Who should reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment;

[1] Isaiah lxv. 2. [2] Eph. iv. 8. [3] Psalm lxviii. 18.

Who should be the Agent in perfecting all the works of Christ.

How marvellous was this gift! How many results flowed from it, both in the Church and in the individual soul; the gifts of the Holy Ghost, wisdom and understanding, counsel and knowledge, ghostly strength, true godliness, and holy fear; the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. When He ascended up on high, He gave gifts unto men, the double portion of His Spirit, the indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost.

2. If we read carefully S. Paul's Epistles we shall notice that the gifts which we receive by the operation of the Holy Ghost are of two kinds, and for two different purposes. There are gifts of grace which are bestowed upon us for our own individual sanctification; and there are other gifts with which we are endowed, not so much for our own individual well-being, as for the edification of the whole Church of Christ.

In Holy Scripture these two classes are distinguished by different words. To the first the term "grace" (*χάρις*) is applied; to the second, a word which we translate "gifts" (*χαρίσματα*). Hence theologians distinguish between the grace which sanctifies us and makes us pleasing to God; and the grace which is freely given to us, that we may do some special work for God in His Church.

You will observe that this twofold division depends upon the *end* or *purpose* for which the grace is given; that the first is given chiefly for a man's own sanctification; the second, principally for the edification of others. The grace which makes a man holy cannot exist in a soul which is in mortal sin; but the grace or gift which enables a man to do a special work for God and His Church can remain,

even where the recipient is in grievous sin. We have an example of this in the power of working miracles, which was possessed by Judas as well as the other Apostles; and in the gifts of priesthood, which are possessed even by an unworthy and wicked priest.

Now, in the passage we have quoted, S. Paul, after saying that when Christ "ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men," goes on to describe these gifts, saying, "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ."[1] You will observe that all these gifts which S. Paul enumerates are for the edification of the Church, and not primarily for the sanctification of the individual.

We find no less than four lists of these gifts or charismata—that to which we have referred in Ephesians, two separate lists in Corinthians,[2] and one in Romans.[3] In Ephesians the charismata mentioned are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. In Corinthians, in the first list we find nine charismata—wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues. In the second list we have eight—apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. While in Romans we have seven—prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, distribution, ruling, and healing.

We shall discover, by comparing these lists, that the same gift is sometimes referred to under a different name. These gifts must be carefully distinguished from the gift of priest-

[1] Eph. iv. 8-12. [2] 1 Cor. xii. 8-11; and 28. [3] Rom. xii. 6-9.

hood, which is a Sacrament of the Church, and depends upon an apostolic ministry. The charismata, however, are not confined to the organized ministry of the Church, and may be, and, indeed, have been, found in a very marked degree among laymen, and may be recognized even among the sects; for to these gifts must be attributed much of the work for Christ which is undoubtedly done by those who are not in communion with the Church.

These gifts were manifested most actively during the first ages of Christianity. Afterward they seem to have given place to the ordinary organized ministry of the Church; though they were sporadically exhibited by individuals, especially in periods of religious revival, and associated with great religious movements. For example, some of them were exhibited in a marked degree by S. Benedict, S. Francis of Assisi, Savonarola, S. Ignatius, S. Francis of Sales, S. Vincent of Paul, and others; and they have been displayed in the great Catholic revival in our own Church. They are to be looked for and prayed for as among the great endowments of the Church of Christ.

How great would be the increase in the Church's power and usefulness if each member of her body, whether priest or layman, were seriously and prayerfully to ask himself, What gift has GOD given to me which I can use for the good of His Church? We are not only given grace to save our own souls; but charismata, to enable us to help other souls and edify the Church of Christ.

Through the Church's fault, this side of a layman's privilege and responsibility has not been sufficiently taught. We read S. Paul's Epistles, and pass over these charismata as though they belonged only to Christianity in apostolic times. But we have the same spirit; we belong to the same body as the Christians of S. Paul's day; and

S. Paul assures them, and through them, us, that while there is but one body and one spirit, there are diversities of gifts, "and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." [1]

Without attempting an examination of all the charismata which S. Paul mentions (for which we have not time to-day), we may point out some four or five which are both needed and exercised in the Church to-day by laymen.

1. The gift of prophecy. This is not necessarily confined to the priesthood; for it has often been exercised in the Church by laymen. It was the gift especially manifested in the lay preaching of S. Francis Assisi and his friars, a gift which we should do well to recognize in many laymen to-day, a gift which might be exercised especially in our mission rooms.

2. The gift of ministry. This may be seen in every kind of mission work among the poor and outcast, especially in district visiting.

3. The gift of teaching. This is often manifested in efficient Sunday-school work; in Bible classes; and in helping to prepare the ignorant for the sacraments.

4. The gift of distribution may be exercised in two ways —by the man of wealth giving of his means, and the man of business giving of his time and experience to administrative work in the Church.

5. The gift of healing. This is practised by the Christian nurse, in the work of ministering to the sick and suffering in our hospitals and in the homes of the poor; and by using the healing of the body to effect the far more important healing of the soul.

How great would be the power of the Church if each

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 11.

member, by prayer and experiment, strove to find out what charismata had been bestowed upon him; and then used his gifts for the glory of God and the edifying of the Body of Christ!

This Ascension Day reminds us that we are living under the benediction of Christ's uplifted Hands; that He ascended up on high to receive gifts for men, and to give gifts to men; and that all these gifts are bestowed, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, to the various individual members of the Body of Christ; on the one hand, in grace for personal sanctification; on the other, in gifts for mutual edification.

Let us each try to learn a practical lesson to-day by asking ourselves, With what gift am I intrusted? What could I do for Christ's Church? And when, by the help of the Holy Spirit, we have answered that question, let us go to work to use the gifts with which we are endowed.

Sermon LXIII.

THE LAW OF GOD AND THE SOUL OF MAN.

(The Sunday after Ascension Day.)

DEUTERONOMY XXX. 11, 14.

"For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. . . . But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

THE Book of Deuteronomy is not a mere recapitulation of the Law given on Sinai, but a commentary on that Law. Indeed, it has been termed "the evangelization of the Law"; for in it the Law is traced to great principles which are anticipations of the teaching of the Gospel itself. Christ Himself implies this in thrice quoting the words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."[1] And S. Paul, in his application of the passage we have chosen for our text to-day, finds in it "the righteousness which is of faith"; that is, the righteousness of the Gospel itself.

I. In the Old Testament lessons for the last two Sundays we have seen something of this, and to-day the lesson carries us a step further in the direction of evangelical truth.

1. From the opening words of the fourth chapter we learned that the Law, so far from being an arbitrary enactment, intended only for the Jews, was based upon eternal principles of truth and righteousness, which have made it

[1] Deut. vi. 5.

the foundation of almost every subsequent moral code. We were taught there, that obedience to Law was the only path to light and progress, and therefore the only road to happiness. And it was for this reason that our Lord said, in the Sermon on the Mount, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."[1]

2. In last Sunday's lesson we had the great summary of the Law which our Lord quotes, and which S. Paul amplifies in his sublime teaching on love in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and which also forms the basis of so much of S. John's First Epistle. In it we found the adumbration of S. Paul's teaching, that "Love is the fulfilment of Law."

3. And again to-day the Law is brought before us in its evangelical aspect, not as a mere series of arbitrary and harsh enactments, but as the revelation of GOD to the soul that can grasp it through faith. In this chapter we have a most striking anticipation of S. Paul's argument in the Second Chapter of Romans, that "he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of GOD."[2] For Moses says, "And the Lord thy GOD will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." And it is to such, to souls that are responsive through faith, that the great Law-giver goes on to say, "For this commandment which I command thee

[1] S. Matt. v. 17, 18. [2] Rom. ii. 28, 29.

this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

To the Jew who is circumcised in heart, and not only in the flesh, this is the promise—that GOD'S revelation in the Law shall not be a difficult code of morals, to be acquired with toil, to be learned from Rabbins and men learned in law. It shall not be the revelation of a far-away GOD, so that heaven has to be reached that the revelation may be found, or the sea to be crossed before its meaning can be understood. But the Word of GOD'S commandment, of GOD'S revelation, even in those Old Testament times, to the Jew whose heart was responsive through a faith such as his great forefather Abraham had manifested, was very nigh, in his mouth, and in his heart, that he might do it.

II. What does this mean?—That GOD'S revelation, while it may be enshrined in the written Law for the benefit of the Church at large, is manifested to the responsive heart through the conscience, through the enlightened intellect, so that a man does not need on ordinary occasions to consult a work on casuistry to find out what is right or wrong, but to listen to the Word of GOD in his own soul, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."[1]

Yes, "the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." Observe the last clause, "that thou mayest do it." It reminds us of

[1] Isaiah xxx. 21.

our Lord's saying, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them."[1] There is no use in having the Word of God very near to us, if we pass it by, shutting our ears to God's Voice. There is no use in living in the light of God's truth, if we close our eyes, and so stumble in darkness. Revelation involves the responsibility of acting upon the revelation. If we have light, we must walk in the light. Thus our conscience will be ever quick to recognize God's Voice, and to warn us when we are straying from God's ways.

Among the objections brought against revelation, chiefly by those who desire an excuse to reject it, is one founded upon the supposed character of revelation itself—that it is difficult to understand, that Christians do not always agree in regard to its meaning, and that this applies both to dogma and morals.

Truth, these objectors say, is self-contradictory, contrary to reason, and beyond the grasp of ordinary minds; whereas, if revelation were intended for all men, it would be simple and easy of comprehension. What is the answer to this? Surely, it is contained in the words of our text, "For this commandment . . . is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. . . . But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

The essential truths of Christianity are within the grasp of the most ordinary mind. Many a peasant has a more practical and living faith than some who have given their lives to the study of philosophy or theology. And yet, while the essentials of revelation are so simple that all can comprehend them, the mysteries which they enshrine are so great that they have attracted the most powerful minds of

[1] S. John xiii. 17.

the Church, and afforded material for study for many centuries, and yet they are not exhausted.

God has not only given to His Church a revelation, but a Guide and Interpreter of that revelation; for Jesus Christ, in saying, "I am the Truth," teaches us that all revelation centres round Himself. But He adds, "When the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, Which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me": [1] and again, "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth . . . For He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." [2]

It is, then, the office of the Holy Ghost, Whose festival we keep next Sunday, to guide us into all truth; that is, into all revealed truth; to teach each Christian, however ordinary may be his intellect, all things that are necessary for his salvation.

And this He does in the individual soul by two of the seven gifts which were infused into the soul in Baptism, and bestowed in fuller measure in Confirmation—the gifts of Wisdom and Understanding—Wisdom, the intuitive gift which enables us, without the processes of reason, to grasp essential truth; and Understanding, the analytic gift which shows us the doctrines of the Church in their true proportion and place in the Christian Creed.

But the same objections which are brought against the doctrines of the Church are brought against its moral code —that it is not sufficiently simple. But here again we reply, first, that the inherent righteousness of the Church's morals is witnessed to by the Christian conscience. And further, we may say that as two gifts of the Holy Ghost enable the intellect to apprehend the doctrines of revela-

[1] S. John xv. 26. [2] S. John xvi. 13, 14.

tion, so there are two gifts which enable the conscience of man to recognize what is right and what is wrong—the gifts of Knowledge and Counsel—Knowledge, which teaches us GOD'S Will in the practical affairs of life; and Counsel, which guides us in the decision of difficult questions.

Moreover, when by the help of these gifts we know what is right, there is yet another gift, that of Ghostly Strength, which enables us to do what is right; and two more gifts, the gifts of Piety and Holy Fear, which enable us not only to do right, but to love right.

Revelation, then, is not merely an arbitrary set of propositions dealing with dogma and morals. Revelation is accompanied by the Revealer, the Holy Ghost, Who in our souls makes clear to us both what is *true* and what is *right,* teaches us what we are to *believe* and what we are to *do.* So that in our case, far more than in that of the Jew, can we apply the words of Moses, "The word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

Sermon LXIV.

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE.

(The Sunday after Ascension Day.)

S. JOHN XVII. 4, 5.

"I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

CHRIST'S high-priestly prayer, recorded in the 17th chapter of S. John, is the most sublime utterance in Holy Scripture; and it has an evidential value as witnessing to our Lord's divine consciousness, and therefore to His Divinity. This is so overwhelming that it can only be disputed by those who reject the Gospel of S. John. But it has an even greater moral value as containing two revelations: our Lord's view of the true object of life—to do GOD'S work; and His purpose for His Church—unity; "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." Let us to-day turn our attention to the first of these revelations.

The words of our text are especially appropriate for our consideration to-day, since, though they were uttered on the eve of the Passion, the action of our Lord's prayer is projected forward to the time of the Ascension. The passion and death, with its necessary sequence in the resurrection, are treated as though they had already taken place, inasmuch as in intention and will the passion and death had been offered.

I. From this point of view, then, let us approach the first few verses of the prayer.

"I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." This passage might be better rendered, "I glorified Thee on earth, having finished the work Thou gavest Me to do"; for it was in the accomplishment of this work that Christ glorified the Father.

But what was the work to which our Lord refers. It was a life of unswerving obedience and of perfect love, the perfect life of the second Adam. Not only did sin come into the world by the disobedience of the first Adam, but every sin may be traced to a definite act of disobedience. S. John defines sin as the transgression of the law;[1] and man was to be redeemed, not only by the death of the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, but by His life. It was the life of perfect obedience, that is, of absolute sinlessness, that made the death meritorious.

And it was also a life of perfect love, of which obedience was both the proof and the result. For the obedience of our Lord was not the obedience of servile fear, not the obedience of a slave, dreading the consequences of an infraction of his master's command. It was the obedience of filial love, the obedience lovingly rendered by a Son to a Father's laws.

This makes obedience not only easy but sweet. And yet it did not save our Lord from the consequences of perfect obedience to GOD'S Will in a sinful world which had rebelled against GOD'S laws. Therefore, the work which was given Him to do involved suffering, of which the passion and death were the climax, and, indeed, the necessary consequence. For to live for GOD must always be to live against

[1] *Cf.* 1 S. John iii. 4.

the world which serves not God. And in our Lord's case this required Him to live counter to the deepest prejudices and most cherished beliefs of His fellow-countrymen, to live and to teach in opposition to the ecclesiastical rulers of His nation. We need not, however, dwell on this. The Gospel tells us the details of His life, the perfection of His obedience, and its result in His sufferings and death.

But what does our Lord say of this work? "I glorified Thee on earth by finishing the work which Thou gavest Me to do." Observe here the entire absence of any consciousness of failure in this work. Could any one but Christ have said this?—I have finished the work. Nothing left undone. Nothing done imperfectly. I have finished the work, and by its very perfection I have glorified Thee, My God.

Compare this utterance with the last words of a great saint, S. Paul. In the last chapter of his last Epistle he writes, "For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."[1] S. Paul says he has finished the *course*, not that he has finished the *work* given him to do. The end of his life is approaching. He is even now being offered up; for his martyrdom is within sight. He looks back, and thanks God that he has fought in the good fight; but he does not say that he has always won the victory. S. Paul was a great saint, but he was not sinless. S. Paul did a great work for Christ, perhaps the greatest that any mere man has done; but it was not a *perfect* work.

It is not only in this passage, but always, that our Lord's words reveal a consciousness of absolute power, a conviction that His work was progressing steadily to the

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7.

end which He had in view. He never manifests any sense of deficiency, any fear of failure, in regard to His work; and this is in itself a witness to His Divinity. "I have finished the work." And who is the "I"? In the first verse our Lord says, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." The "I" is no less a person than the Son of GOD; and the prayer is one that no one but the Son of GOD could have made, "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." "Glorify Thou Me with Thine own self"—in the intimate union of the ever blessed Trinity—"with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." This is a clear assertion of the divine pre-existence of the Son.

And what had He laid aside when He came into this world?—Not His Sonship, not any attribute of His Divinity; for this He could not do without ceasing to be GOD; for GOD'S attributes are GOD'S essence, and GOD Himself cannot cease to be what He is. No; what He laid aside, He clearly tells us, was the glory, not the nature, not the attributes of GOD. The best commentary on this passage is S. Paul's, when, exhorting the Philippians to humility, he adduces the humiliation of the Incarnation, saying of Christ Jesus that, "being in the form of GOD, He counted it not a prize to be snatched at to be on an equality with GOD: but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross." This tells us when it was that He emptied Himself of His glory—at the Incarnation, and how—by taking the form of a slave.

And then S. Paul goes on to tell us in what way our

Lord's prayer, "Glorify Thou Me," was answered; for he says, "Wherefore also GOD highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the Name which is above every name; that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of GOD the Father." [1]

It is not, however, in the high-priestly prayer only that our Lord refers to the work which He has to do; for we read, in the first year of His ministry, that He said to His disciples, "My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." [2] From the very beginning He had the clearest conception of His mission, of the work that His Father had given Him to do. And now that His life is drawing to a close, He bears witness that the work has been perfectly accomplished.

II. From these passages and others we may learn our Lord's view of life—that it is a time for work; that there is responsibility for accomplishing that work; and that the work must not be of our own choosing, but the work which our Father has given us to do. There are other views of life in the Gospels, which are true, but partial; for example—life is set forth under the image of talents to be used, lights to be kept burning, labour to be done in GOD'S vineyard. But all these are summed up in this more definite and perfect statement—that life is given us to accomplish perfectly a work which GOD gradually reveals to us, a work for which GOD created us.

What strange views men have concerning the purpose of life! If we may judge by their actions, the majority seem to think that it is an opportunity for glorifying self, not GOD. What will not men do for the praise of their

[1] *Cf.* Phil. ii. 6-12. [2] S. John iv. 34.

fellow-men! How our hearts throb with pleasure when we hear that the world appreciates us, when we read a flattering account of ourselves in some newspaper, or are told by an acquaintance of the complimentary speeches which they have heard made in regard to us! Our heart does not throb with delight because we *deserved* the praise—that, perhaps, hardly enters into our mind—but because we have *attained* it, because we have succeeded in gaining glory to ourselves. And yet in theory we accept our Lord's view of life, that life is given us to glorify God, that this is the true end of life.

Again, in regard to our work, from what point of view do we seek it?—as the work which God has for us to do in this world, or as the work which we wish to do, which we think we can make a success of, which will win us the admiration of men?

We have noticed that in our Lord's words there is never any consciousness of the possibility of the failure of His work. And yet, at the moment when He said, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do," His work, in the world's eyes, was ending in failure—His apostles were just about to be scattered, and Himself to be put to death. But much of the work which in the world's eyes is a failure, is, in God's eyes, eternal in its fruit. And still more of the work, which the world thinks a great success, is, probably, in God's eyes, an utter failure, in that it bears no fruit in eternity.

What is the work which God has for *me* to do? Do I know it? Am I doing it? It is a work which is revealed to me gradually, through the operation of God's providence. It may seem in itself very insignificant, but it is part of a plan so magnificent that it passes the comprehension of man in this world.

The Purpose of Life.

The workmen who are engaged in building a splendid cathedral do not insist, do not expect, that the architect should make known to each one of them his whole design. No; they are contented with the working drawings of their own parts of the work. The mason has the working drawings and measurements of the stone he is to cut. The sculptor has the drawing of the tracery which he is to carve on that stone. Some of the carving is very simple, some very elaborate. Each workman is contented to do his own work according to the working drawings which are given him. He does not waste his time in asking to have explained to him the purpose of the work which he sees some other workman engaged upon. And what is the result?—The cathedral is finished in all its magnificence, each one having striven to do perfectly his own work.

This, surely, is the view of life which our Lord would teach us. Our meat must be to do our Father's Will, to finish that portion of our Father's work which is intrusted to us. If we are faithful in our work; if, in spite of imperfections, we at last bring it to something like GOD'S purpose, our reward will be to see that work, our work, in the great City of GOD in eternity.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."[1] Blessed, indeed, are those who so finish the work which GOD has given them to do in this world, that it may follow them and be their joy in heaven itself.

[1] Rev. xiv. 13.

Sermon LXV.

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST.

(Whitsunday.)

DEUTERONOMY XVI. 9, 10.

"Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn. And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy GOD with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the Lord thy GOD, according as the Lord thy GOD hath blessed thee."

THE festivals of the Jewish Church fall under two heads, those connected with the institution of the Sabbath, and the historical or great festivals. These latter were three in number, the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, and were bound up intimately both with the history and national life of the Jews.

I. While they are primarily associated with three great events in the national history—the deliverance from Egypt, the giving of the Law at Sinai, and the wanderings in the wilderness—they are also intimately associated with GOD'S gift of harvest. So that they may be regarded both as thanksgivings for the blessing of national deliverance and freedom, and for the gifts of the necessaries of life, which make a free nation prosperous.

1. The Passover as a sacrifice commemorated the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt by the death of the firstborn. But associated with the Passover was the presentation of the first ripe sheaf of the barley harvest on the

second day of the Passover, the first day of unleavened bread. On the 14th of the month Nisan the place where the first sheaf of the barley harvest was to be reaped was marked out by delegates from the Sanhedrim, who tied together in bundles, while still standing, the sheaf which was to be cut down.

The time for cutting the sheaf was the even of the 15th of Nisan, just as the sun went down. Three men, each with a sickle and a basket, formally set to work, and they cut down the barley to the amount of one ephah, or ten omers, equal to about three pecks and three pints of English measure. The ears were brought into the court of the Temple and threshed out there, then parched on a pan perforated with holes (so that each grain might be touched by the fire), and finally exposed to the wind. It was then ground in a barley mill and passed through sieves until the flour was sufficiently fine.

Of the ten omers, only one omer of flour—about five pints—was offered in the Temple on the following day, the 16th day of Nisan. This omer of flour was mixed with oil and frankincense and waved before the Lord. A handful was then taken out and burned on the altar, and the remainder belonged to the priest. This presentation of the omer at the Passover was a dedication of the harvest to God. The sheaf reaped was of barley because barley ripened first.

2. The feast of unleavened bread was in a sense prolonged for fifty days, although the Passover ended with its octave. The Jews were directed to number seven weeks from the time that they began to put the sickle to the corn, that is, from the evening of the 14th of Nisan. Then they were to keep the Feast of Weeks, which was intended to commemorate the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai;

for this took place fifty days after the first Passover. The Feast of Weeks was also a harvest festival, in that the dedication of the harvest, which had begun with the presentation of the omer at the Passover, found its completion in the thankoffering of the two wave-loaves at Pentecost.

Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks, was kept as a holy convocation, in which no servile work was done, and all males were required to appear before the Lord at His Sanctuary. Certain sacrifices were appointed, which we find in Numbers xxviii. These we may pass over, and turn our attention to the presentation of the two loaves which gave its distinctive feature to the Feast of Pentecost. After the festival offerings had been made—the sin offerings and the burnt offerings with their meat offerings—came the peculiar oblation of the day, that of two wave-loaves with their accompanying sacrifices.

As the omer offered at the Passover was of barley, that being the corn which ripened first, so the two wave-loaves were prepared from wheat grown in the country. This wheat was reaped under conditions somewhat similar to those we have described in regard to the omer. From the flour thus obtained, two omers, or double the quantity used at the Passover, were taken and made into two loaves. These loaves were baked on the evening preceding the festival, or, if that fell on the Sabbath, two evenings before. Each loaf weighed about five pounds and a quarter. A peculiarity of this offering was that the loaves were *leavened,* and in this they represented the offering of the ordinary food of the people.

Lastly, after the waving of the loaves before the Lord, with their appropriate sacrifices, the people brought their own freewill offerings as the Lord had prospered them. And the afternoon and evening were spent in a festive meal,

to which the stranger and the poor and the Levite were bidden as the Lord's welcome guests.

3. The Feast of Tabernacles was the last great national festival. It fell on the 15th of the 7th month, Tishri, and lasted for seven days. It was called the Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths, because during these seven days the people were required to live in booths made of boughs of trees, to remind them of the wanderings of their forefathers in the wilderness.[1] This feast fell at a time when the crops had been long stored, and the fruits also gathered, and the vintage passed. It was the most joyous of all the festive seasons, and it was fitting that as the commencement of the harvest had been consecrated by the offering of the first ripe sheaf of barley, and the full ingathering of the corn by the two wave-loaves, so now there should be a harvest festival of thanksgiving and joy for all that had been gathered in.

Thus we see that the land and its fruits were closely connected with the history of the people who inhabited it.

II. In appointing the first lesson for Whitsunday the Church evidently desires to draw our attention to the points of resemblance between the Christian and Jewish feasts of Pentecost.

1. The Jewish Pentecost commemorated the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, the Law written on tables of stone by the finger of GOD. The Christian Pentecost tells of the new Law ministered by the apostles of Christ, written "not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart," written "with the Spirit of the living GOD."[2] It is with Pentecost that we associate the giving of "the faith," of the "deposit" in which was implicitly contained every doctrine of the Christian Creed. This was to

[1] *Cf.* Levit. xxiii. 42, 43. [2] *Cf.* 2 Cor. iii. 3.

be unfolded by the Holy Ghost, and explicitly taught as the needs of the Church should require.

2. The Jewish Pentecost was the Feast of firstfruits of the wheat harvest, the harvest of the earth. The Christian Pentecost saw the firstfruits of the harvest of heaven, the gathering into the Church of some three thousand souls who were in the way of salvation.

Our feast of ingathering, of tabernacles, in its fullest sense cannot be celebrated until all are gathered in, until the great harvest festival of the redeemed is held, when this world shall have come to an end. Meanwhile, our Pentecosts on earth should kindle us with zeal to do GOD'S work, GOD'S missionary work, in gathering the harvest of souls into the Church of Christ!

Our Lord said to His disciples, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal."[1] Does He not say these words to us to-day? Lift up your eyes and look out upon the world. After nearly twenty centuries of missionary work, how many remain outside the Christian fold! The fields are white unto the harvest; the harvest indeed is plenteous, but the labourers are few. We must pray, as Christ has commanded, that the Lord of the harvest will send forth labourers into His harvest.[2] We must pray; but we must do more than pray—we must help to send forth those labourers. And perhaps some among us might be able to say, Lord, "Here am I; send me."[3]

3. Again, we may observe that the Jewish Pentecost depended on the feast of the Passover. It was counted from the first day of unleavened bread. So the Christian Pentecost depends on Easter; for our Lord said, "It is

[1] S. John iv. 35, 36. [2] *Cf.* S. Matt. ix. 37, 38. [3] Isaiah vi. 8.

expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." [1] *Salvation* depended first upon sacrifice, the Sacrifice of the Lamb of GOD, Which taketh away the sins of the world. This was consummated at Easter. But *sanctification* is the work of that Spirit of which Christ says, "If I depart, I will send Him unto you." And the Spirit was given at Pentecost.

This gift of the Spirit is not a transient gift, as under the old dispensation, but a permanent and abiding presence both in the Church and in the baptized soul. The work, too, of the Holy Spirit is not only to be traced, as upon the day of the first Christian Pentecost, in gathering in to the Church, by missionary work, the souls of men. Its fruits are to be sought also both in the Church itself, in her saints, and in the individual soul, in the fruits of the Spirit. There is a harvest in each soul which produces the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.[2]

May we, this Pentecost, so yield ourselves to the gracious work of the Comforter, that we may bring forth this fruit to our own sanctification, to the edifying of the Church; and, above all, to the glory of GOD.

[1] S. John xvi. 7. [2] *Cf.* Gal. v. 22, 23.

Sermon LXVI.

THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.

(Whitsunday.)

ROMANS VIII. 16, 17.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of GOD: and if children, then heirs; heirs of GOD, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

THE Epistle to the Romans is S. Paul's "Magnum Opus," and in studying it we walk among the mountain regions of theology; for in it S. Paul treats of the most sublime relations of the soul to GOD. Starting from the definition of the Gospel as "the power of GOD unto salvation to every one that believeth,"[1] S. Paul treats, first, of the condition of man under the dominion of sin; then of the possibilities of man under the dominion of grace, that is, of the Holy Spirit; then of the means by which this salvation is accomplished —on GOD's part, through the atoning death of Christ; on man's part, by that living faith which is the instrument of his justification.

In a mountain range some peaks are higher than others. First, we ascend the foot hills, then the lower peaks, until at last a summit is reached which rises above all the others, and, as it were, dominates the whole range. So in this Epistle certain chapters stand out as more sublime in the truths of which they treat; but in the chapter, a part of which forms our lesson for to-day, the highest peak is

[1] Rom. i. 16.

reached, the nearest approach to heaven is attained, in the description of man under the absolute dominion of the Holy Spirit.

The 8th chapter of the Epistle opens with the triumphant proclamation of man's acquittal, through union with Christ, by the operation of the Holy Ghost. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Then follows a striking picture of the contrast between the "life of the flesh" and the "life of the Spirit," leading up to the announcement of the magnificent privileges of divine sonship and heavenly inheritance. Here the lesson for to-day ends. The remainder of the chapter, therefore, does not come under our consideration.

I. The life of the flesh and the life of the Spirit—how often S. Paul contrasts them! In one place he says, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."[1] In a second, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."[2] And again, in the chapter we are considering, "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God." What does S. Paul mean by "flesh" and "Spirit" in this antithesis, which is so prominent in his teaching?

1. By the "flesh" he does not mean merely a life of

[1] Gal. v. 16, 17. [2] Rom. vii. 23.

indulgence in what we commonly call the sins of the flesh —gluttony, impurity, sloth, and such like; for among the works of the flesh he places hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings—sins which belong to the intellect, rather than to the lower, fleshly nature. Under the life of the flesh S. Paul would include pride of intellect; and as all pride is of the nature of falsehood, that would cover also falsity of intellect. Then, too, he would include perversity of will, as well as corruption of the affections. So that by the life of the flesh S. Paul means a life dominated by a principle which approaches man from the material side of his nature; for man's nature has distinctly two sides—the material and the spiritual side.

On the material side man is linked with this lower world in which he lives; on the spiritual side he is linked with God and that other world for which he was made—heaven. Man is body and spirit. Perhaps we might better say, body and soul. But then we should have to subdivide the soul into the lower, sensitive, animal soul, and the higher, rational soul or spirit, by which man reaches out for God.

Now these two parts of a man's nature are in conflict. The material world in which he lives approaches him through the avenue of his senses, not only appealing to his animal passions, but attracting the higher powers of his soul by its beauty and fascinating interest.

Materialism is the danger of our own day. But by "materialism" we do not mean only temptation to gratify the lower passions which man has in common with the animals. Materialism also appeals to the highest and most cultivated minds of the day, in art, in music, in science, in poetry, and literature. And it even has its own

religion, which has been called the religion of "Naturalism," the worship of nature and its so-called laws and forces.

But it is not only in our own day that materialism has threatened the soul of man. It was so in S. Paul's time. The highest civilization of Greece and Rome was simply a religion of materialism. Man was to live for this world, to make it feed not only his body but his mind, to make it minister to his pleasures, stimulate his hopes, and gratify his ambitions. And this is what S. Paul means by the life of the flesh, by being carnally minded; and he says, "They that are in the flesh cannot please GOD."

From the world's point of view the man who lives this life may be very philanthropic and highly moral; but he is essentially of the earth, earthy; and such a life is, S. Paul tells us, "enmity against GOD."

2. By the life of the Spirit S. Paul means the antithesis to all this—a life dominated by a principle which approaches man from the opposite direction, from GOD, from heaven, through his rational soul, not merely through his senses; a life which has for its object not pleasure but duty, which looks for its reward not only to this world but to the world to come.

This is the life for which man was created, but from which he fell by sin. So that, while we speak of the spiritual life as a "supernatural" life, in one sense it is not supernatural, but the most natural life, since it is the life for which man was created. It is only supernatural in the sense that it is above man's present fallen nature, not above the nature with which GOD endowed him, and which, by the gift of sanctifying grace, is intended to reach out to and to attain to GOD and heaven.

This life is restored to man in Christ Jesus through the

operation of the Holy Spirit. This life is what S. Paul describes in the culmination of his treatise on the relation of the soul to God as the life of the Spirit of God in us.

II. S. Paul further shows that it embraces two splendid privileges—divine sonship and heavenly inheritance.

1. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." We scarcely need to explain this passage, it is so clear. The life of the Spirit is the life of the child of God. It is not only the *possession* of divine sonship, but it is its *realization;* for the Spirit enables us to cry, "Abba, Father," that is, to claim the privileges of sonship.

It is possible for a child to be born of royal parents, but to be brought up in ignorance of his parentage. All Christians are by baptism children of God; but how many live, and even die, without realizing the glorious privileges of this sonship! It is when they are walking in the Spirit, when they are led by the Spirit, when the Holy Ghost dominates their life, that they not only possess but recognize this sonship. For S. Paul tells us that in this case there are two witnesses to it, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." The spirit of man bears witness to the fact that he does not really belong to this world; for he is never really satisfied with this world; he always craves for something beyond. But alone and unaided he does not recognize his divine origin. It is only when the Spirit of God bears witness with his spirit, that he knows that he is a child of God,

that he learns of the glorious privileges which are his through this divine sonship.

2. And then there follows, as a necessary consequence, a heavenly heritage: "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." We are children of God by adoption in Christ, and therefore joint-heirs with Him of a heavenly inheritance. But there is a condition attached—"If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." We must follow His steps on earth if we are to follow Him in heaven; and they will lead us through paths of suffering, though they will lead us to the life of glory!

Whitsunday is the Festival of the Holy Spirit. Surely it is a time when we should examine ourselves in regard to the manifestation of the life of the Holy Spirit in us, when we should rejoice in the privileges of our divine sonship, and should praise and glorify the Holy Ghost for His work in our souls.

Sermon LXVII.

ISAIAH'S VISION.

(Trinity Sunday.)

ISAIAH VI. 3.

"And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory."

"NO man hath seen GOD at any time"; [1] yet some of GOD's saints have had visions of GOD; that is, through sensible images, His glory, not His essence, has been manifested to them. Many such visions are recorded in the Old Testament—among the most striking, this vision of Isaiah, the vision of Ezekiel,[2] of Daniel,[3] of Abram,[4] of Jacob,[5] and of Moses.[6]

I. While it follows, from the very fact that GOD is Spirit, that no man can see GOD in His essence; yet there are three ways in which men can attain, according to their capacity, to a knowledge of GOD such as is described under the term "sight," though by "sight" is not meant direct vision.

1. There is a vision of GOD which all men have more or less in this life, and the degree in which they enjoy it depends on their faith and holiness. All men see GOD more or less in His works; for nature is a revelation of GOD. But this vision is, of course, indirect and only through the media of GOD's works. A clearer vision of GOD is obtained through faith. And yet of the knowledge

[1] S. John i. 18. [2] Ezek. i. 28. [3] Dan. vii. 9. [4] Gen. xv. 1, 17. [5] Gen. xxviii. 13. [6] Exodus xxxiii. 18-23.

which is vouchsafed through faith S. Paul says, "For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."[1]

A still clearer vision of GOD is vouchsafed to those who add to their faith holiness; for it is a special blessing promised by our Lord to the pure in heart, that they shall "see" GOD. As there are degrees in physical sight, some being able to see with a much greater distinctness than others, according as the eye is healthy and perfectly formed, so is it with the spiritual eye. The "pure in heart" have special powers of spiritual vision; but those to whom the Beatitude refers are they who have been cleansed from sin, not those who have never sinned; for this the word (*καθαρόι*), translated "pure," implies.

S. Paul, in the passage we have just quoted, speaks of our beholding "as in a mirror"; and the pure in heart see GOD reflected in the mirror of their own soul. A mirror, to reflect an object perfectly, must be free from flaws and must be bright. If there be flaws in the mirror it distorts the object; and if it be not bright it obscures what it reflects. In proportion as we have been cleansed by penitence, and by earnest effort to conform ourselves to the pattern of Christ's life, shall we be able to reflect GOD'S image; and in reflecting it we shall not only see GOD, but become Godlike.

2. A second way by which GOD is seen is in "ecstasy." To some of GOD'S saints has been vouchsafed, even in this life, a special vision of GOD, through what we call ecstasy. Ecstasy is a state in which a man passes out of himself, in which the actions of the senses are suspended; but the will, retaining full power, is absorbed in GOD. S. Paul

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

describes this state when he says, "I knew a man in Christ . . . (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: GOD knoweth); such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: GOD knoweth); how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."[1]

That it has been the privilege of many saints to enjoy ecstatic communion with GOD, is a matter about which there can be no doubt, since we have so many instances in Holy Scripture, as well as in the history of the saints. But exactly how the ecstatic condition was produced, we cannot tell, since even S. Paul, who experienced it, was not sure whether he was in the body or not in the body at the time of the vision. But the functions of the body seem on such occasions to have been suspended, and the powers of the soul supernaturally increased. The vision of Isaiah, of which we read in the first lesson to-day, was of this character.

3. Thirdly, there is a vision which belongs, not to this life, but to that of heaven itself—the beatific vision, when we shall see GOD face to face, when we shall know even as we are known; when by a special endowment of the intellect, called by theologians "the light of glory," it will be enabled to see GOD directly and in Himself, though not comprehensively, since no finite intellect can perfectly comprehend GOD, Who is Infinite.

II. We may observe that, although Isaiah describes the surroundings of GOD, he makes no attempt to portray what is indescribable—GOD Himself. He says, "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up,

[1] 2 Cor. xii. 2-4.

and His train (the skirts of His robe) filled the Temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory."

In this vision of GOD we have an adumbration of the Holy Trinity, since not only is the Trisagion of the seraphim the same as that of the worship of the ever blessed Trinity, revealed in the Apocalypse of S. John, but Isaiah hears the Voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" These pronouns "I" and "us" imply, if they do not declare, a plurality of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead. That which, however, makes this indication of the Holy Trinity strongest, is S. John's reference to Isaiah's vision as a vision of the Son of GOD; for he says, referring to our Lord, "These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him."[1]

1. The characteristic attribute of the Godhead which is impressed upon us, both by the words and actions of the seraphim, and by the utterance of Isaiah himself, is GOD'S absolute and unapproachable Holiness. We may notice that of the six wings which each seraph possessed, only two are used in GOD'S active service—"with twain he did fly." The other four are used in covering the face and the feet, thus proclaiming, by symbolic action, what their voices ceaselessly declare—GOD'S unapproachable Holiness. They keep on crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory."

2. The same attribute overwhelms Isaiah with the conviction of sinfulness; for he says, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell

[1] S. John xii. 41.

in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

We are reminded of the similar utterance of S. Peter, when our Lord manifested His miraculous power in the draught of fishes; for we are told that S. Peter "fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."[1] The nearer man approaches to God, the more he feels his sinfulness. In the searching light of God's Presence, every sin stands revealed to a man. So that we find it is a characteristic of the saints, those whose sins were so much fewer and less than the sins of ordinary men, that they have an overwhelming consciousness of their sinfulness. It comes from the realization of this attribute of God—His intense Holiness.

3. God, Who vouchsafes the vision, supplies the remedy; for Isaiah tells us that one of the seraphim, "having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar," approached him, and laid it upon his mouth, and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

Fire is the symbol of purification, since no impurity can withstand its action. The "coal" in our translation seems to have been a heated stone, forming part of the altar, and upon which incense was burnt; for the altar probably symbolizes the altar of incense in the Temple. Applied to the prophet's lips it cleanses them and fits him for his work.

We may carry away a simple lesson this Trinity Sunday from our study of Isaiah's vision—the lesson of God's Holiness, of our sinfulness, and of our need of cleansing. There is an altar, not only in heaven, but on earth—the Altar upon which the Sacrifice of Calvary is mystically

[1] S. Luke v. 8.

renewed—and the living Coal from that Altar is carried by the hands of GOD'S messengers, GOD'S priests, to the lips of those who come with a deep sense of their own unworthiness, but with an earnest desire to consecrate themselves to GOD'S service.

Let us come constantly to the Holy Communion, not only that we may be cleansed, but that, having in our hearts that glowing Coal—the Body of Him Who is Love—our love may be kindled, our souls may glow with the divine fire of love of GOD, which will burn out in us all that is evil, and will fill us with zeal in GOD'S service.

Sermon LXVIII.

ALPHA AND OMEGA.

(Trinity Sunday.)

REVELATION I. 8.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the Lord, Which is, and Which was, and Which is to come, the Almighty."

THE festivals of the Church's year so far have been commemorations of historical events, though events connected with great doctrines of the Christian religion. Such were the Annunciation, Christmas, Easter, the Ascension and Whitsunday. Trinity Sunday differs from all other feasts, in that it commemorates no historical event, but a theological doctrine only—the Doctrine of GOD, three in Persons and one in Substance.

This feast, Trinity Sunday, was formally instituted by

Pope John XXII. in 1334, though it was observed in individual dioceses as early as the 12th century, in some places on the Sunday after Whitsunday, and in some places on the Sunday preceding Advent; though in many dioceses, and indeed in Rome, it was not observed at all. Perhaps the earliest mention we have of it is in the 10th century in the diocese of Liége.

In the opening verses of S. John's vision, which is appointed as the second lesson for this morning's service, we have a proclamation of Almighty God Himself concerning certain characteristics of His Godhead: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, Which is, and Which was, and Which is to come, the Almighty." This is appropriate for our consideration on the day which the Church sets apart in honour of the Holy Trinity.

The Speaker in this verse proclaims Himself to be the *Lord God,* the Almighty; for though our translation has only "the Lord," in the Greek both titles are found. The context, however, shows us without doubt that it is the second Person of the Holy Trinity Who is speaking; for He has just been described by S. John under His Name Jesus Christ. We have therefore brought before us the Unity of the Godhead, together with the distinction of Persons in it. The Lord God, the Almighty, proclaims, "I am Alpha and Omega"; and yet, this Lord God is Jesus Christ. In this proclamation our Lord reveals to us three characteristics of the Godhead.

I. "I am Alpha and Omega." The words which follow in our translation, "the Beginning and the Ending," are not found in the ancient manuscripts, and are undoubtedly an explanatory gloss; for this is precisely what is meant by "Alpha and Omega," the first and the last

words of the Greek alphabet, which are used to indicate beginning and ending and completeness.

In what sense is God the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending?—Not as regards time; for He was before time began, and shall continue unchanged when time is no more. This, therefore, does not refer to time, but rather to the fact that God is both the Origin, or Source, and the Object or End of all creation. God was the first Cause of creation. This is easy to understand; for the idea of causality in our minds leads us naturally to demand a first cause. But God is also the final Cause of everything.

What do we mean by a final cause? We mean the purpose for which a thing is made. If we desire to understand a machine, it is important that we should not only know its first cause, that is, how it came into being, or who made it, but its final cause—*why* it came into being, or the purpose for which it was made. Indeed, this latter is the more important; for to know the maker does not always help us to understand the machine; but to know the purpose for which it was made does greatly aid us in comprehending it. If we take, for instance, a watch or a steam engine, and ask what it is; to be made acquainted with the name of the maker will be of little advantage to us in studying the mechanism; but to be told what its purpose is helps us, at least to some extent, to understand it.

When we say, then, that God is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the first Cause and the final Cause of all things, we mean that all things are to be explained by reference to God's purpose in creating them. And this is especially true of man. If we are to understand man's life in this world, it is not enough for us to say that he was created by God. We must ask,

Why did God create him—for what purpose? And when we are able to answer this question, we shall be able to understand man's place and man's life on earth.

"In the beginning God created."[1] Before that moment God existed in eternal solitude. God's love led Him to create. But He created with a purpose. What was that purpose?—His own glory and man's happiness.

Think of the creatures flowing out from God. Think of this planet to which our life is confined, progressing from the lower kingdoms to the higher, from the mineral to the vegetable, to the animal; until at last it finds its culmination, its flower and its crown, in man, in whom every kingdom of creation is summed up. In his body, the mineral, vegetable, animal kingdoms are represented; in his rational soul the Spiritual Kingdom—and something more; for man's soul is a special creation of God, the capping stone, the crowning act, of God's work.

So far we think of creation flowing out from God. But when it reaches its flood tide in man it begins to flow back to God; for God is not only the first Cause, but the final Cause. He not only made all things, but He made all things for Himself, for His glory. And how does the life which culminates in man flow back into God? Through the stupendous mystery of the Incarnation. The Second Person of the ever blessed Trinity becomes Man, that is, takes human nature into union with the Godhead, and in taking human nature takes all creation into God.

The Incarnation was but the beginning of the flowing back of life to God. That which was begun in the Incarnation is to go on through the agency of Christ's Body, the Church on earth, until its work is accomplished, and that which S. John saw in his vision comes to pass—"Behold,

[1] Gen. i. 1.

He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." But S. Paul tells us that, "When all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that GOD may be All in all." [1]

GOD shall be All in all; for GOD is the final Cause of all. Think what this means in your own life! I came forth from GOD; He was my Creator. I therefore belong to GOD; for He made me for Himself; and when my work on earth is done, I shall go to GOD. Hence, I can only find happiness here in fulfilling GOD'S purpose for me, in doing the work for which He created me.

Again, think of all life flowing out from GOD, and then flowing back to Him; all creatures made by GOD for a purpose—His glory and their eternal happiness! Think of all creation summed up in man, and therefore partaking of man's destiny; of his hopes and fears here, of his glory hereafter; for S. Paul tells us that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now"; and again, that "the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of GOD." [2]

But what is this "glorious liberty of the children of GOD"? It is realized now in the exaltation of the Son of Man to the glory of heaven. It will be realized hereafter by the Church of the Redeemed, through their union with Christ in His glorified Manhood. GOD, then, is the final Cause of all, and all shall find their happiness, all shall find their glory, in the eternal fulfilment of His loving purpose for them.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End-

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 28. [2] Rom. viii. 22, 21.

ing," saith the Lord GOD. What a glorious revelation of man's destiny is contained in this proclamation of GOD's character!

II. We have spent so much time in considering the first of the three characteristics of the Godhead revealed in the text, that we must very briefly pass over the two that remain. "I am Alpha and Omega . . . Which is, and Which was, and Which is to come." In these words we have brought before us GOD's attribute of Eternity. Past, present and future, are all one unchanging present to GOD, because He is Eternal. Eternity is not an infinite succession of years, but that which exists necessarily, and has no beginning, no end, and no change. We shall at once see that there is only One Who can fulfil this definition, and that One is GOD. Eternity is an attribute of GOD, because GOD is Infinite and Self-existing. We shall share in the eternal life of heaven if we are numbered with the saints in glory everlasting, only by virtue of our union with GOD, through Christ.

III. The Almighty—"Which is, and Which was, and Which is to come, the Almighty." This word (*παντοκράτωρ*) does not so much signify that GOD is able to *do* all things, as that nothing can be done apart from Him, that He is the source of all power, that He upholds and maintains in being all things, whether spiritual or material. As S. Paul says, "There is no power but of GOD: the powers that be are ordained of GOD."[1]

To-day, Trinity Sunday, we are called upon to consider the Doctrine of GOD. GOD is unfathomable. We can only know Him here in part, as He reveals Himself to us; but in the words which we have been considering He reveals three great attributes, all of real, practical importance in

[1] Rom. xiii. 1.

our daily lives: That GOD is the first and final Cause of our being; therefore in Him only can we find our happiness. That GOD is Eternal; that in union with Him, therefore, only can we attain to eternal life. And that GOD is Almighty; therefore we can trust Him, rest in Him and adore Him, as He reveals His sovereign Will to us in the providence which guides our lives.

Sermon LXIX.

THE PASSAGE OF THE JORDAN.

(The First Sunday after Trinity.)

JOSHUA III. 11.

"Behold, the Ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan."

THE passage of the Jordan, like the passage of the Red Sea, not only stands out prominently among GOD'S wonderful dealings with His chosen people in delivering them from their enemies and leading them into the possession of the promised land; but both are most striking types of the life and experience of the Christian. S. Paul tells that "all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."[1] And the Fathers of the Church, from Origen and Tertullian downwards, have loved to dwell on that aspect of this great event—the passage of the Jordan by the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua.

[1] 1 Cor. x. 11.

The Passage of the Jordan.

I. Our first lesson to-day begins with the words, "And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel." This was said in reference to the miraculous dividing of the River Jordan in order that Joshua and the Israelites might pass into Canaan. And it was at the same river Jordan that GOD began to magnify the true Joshua, our Lord Jesus Christ; for it was when He was baptized therein that the heavens opened and the Holy Ghost descended, and the Voice was heard, proclaiming, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."[1]

Joshua was magnified as the leader appointed by GOD in the place of Moses; Jesus was magnified as the Leader in the place of all who had gone before. Joshua led GOD'S people into their earthly haven; Jesus leads GOD'S children *through* their earthly heritage, to that heavenly land of which Canaan was the type.

Joshua and the Israelites in passing over the Jordan were symbolically baptized. Christ and His people by a real baptism, not only of water but of Spirit, enter upon their spiritual inheritance in the Body of Christ, the Church.

Joshua does not enter at once into *possession* of Canaan; for that he has to fight, and many nations have to be conquered. Further we know that, through the disobedience of his followers, those nations were not really subdued for many, many years; but remained, to be, as it were, a thorn in the side of Israel, always troubling them, sometimes enslaving them.

How strikingly this represents the experience of Christ's followers. Through baptism they enter the Church; but it is the Church *militant* here on earth. They are not

[1] S. Matt. iii. 17.

only surrounded by foes without, but there are traitors within. Traitors they discover even in their own individual souls; their lawless desires, always troubling them, often enslaving them, bringing them into captivity to besetting sins. Against these they have to fight for many, many years, sometimes for a whole lifetime.

Joshua chose twelve men to carry twelve stones out of the river as a memorial of GOD'S work of mercy. Jesus chooses His twelve apostles out of this world, that they may be the twelve foundation stones of the Church of GOD.

Thus far we may trace the points of likeness and contrast between Joshua and our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Then we read that "the priests that bare the Ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan."

Here we may observe, first, not only that their leader is changed from Moses to Joshua, but that the "pillar of cloud" that guided them through the wilderness is exchanged for the "Ark of the covenant," which henceforth is to go before them. Moses and the pillar of cloud typify the darkness and difficulty of the Law; Joshua and the Ark typify Jesus and the Gospel. The Law guided them through the wilderness; the Gospel was to bring them into the promised land. The Law, enveloped in darkness, led them in uncertain wanderings; the Gospel leads them in a narrow path, but one which is clearly marked by the footsteps of Christ and His saints; a narrow path, which leads with absolute certainty to heaven.

The Ark with its mercy-seat was GOD'S earthly throne. It contained within it three things—the two tables of the Law, the "pot of manna," and "Aaron's rod that

budded."[1] It was a type of Christ, through Whom God manifested Himself on earth, and Who said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."[2] The Way was symbolized by the rod; the Truth, by the divine Law which was to guide men in the way; and the Life, by the pot of manna, typifying that bread from heaven which is the Bread of Life, of which, except we eat, we can have no life in us.

Again, we may consider the Ark as symbolizing Christ's sacramental Presence in His Church. Its place in this world is in the midst of the Jordan, and by it stand the priests who minister at the Church's Altars. There the Ark remains, there the priests stand firm, until all the Israelites have passed over Jordan. What a picture of the Church in the world—the only thing that preserves the world from destruction! There it stands, planted on the Rock, unmoved by storms, holding back the floods of evil, until God's people have passed over into their inheritance. There the Ark has stood, with the priests ministering, for nearly two thousand years. Again and again the waters of worldliness and sin have threatened to overwhelm it, but never have they succeeded! And what multitudes, by its agency, have passed safely through the waters of this troubled world to the haven where they would be.

III. But in this we have not only a lesson of encouragement for the Church at large, but for each individual member of the Church, since "the Ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth" represents to us both the Church and her divine Head and Leader, Christ. The waters of Jordan held back by the Ark tell us of the waves of this troublesome world. What are some of these waves?

1. First, there are the deep waters of affliction, the waves of sorrow, which roll in upon the soul at times with

[1] *Cf.* Heb. ix. 4. [2] S. John xiv. 6.

such overwhelming bitterness. And where can we seek for help but from Him Who said, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow,"[1] and from His Church, which is indeed our "Mother of Consolation," listening with tender pity to the sorrows of her children? If we are called to pass through the deep waters of sorrow, our consolation must be that the Ark of the covenant of the Lord has passed before us into this Jordan.

2. Then there are floods of suffering. But the Christian's strength in suffering is to look up to the Crucifix and see how his Leader passed through suffering to glory; or to read the history of His Church, a long history of persecution and suffering. If the great water-floods of suffering threaten us, the Ark of the covenant of the Lord has passed through this Jordan before us.

3. Again, there are the waves of labour and toil. But who ever worked as Jesus worked?—Not for Himself, but always for others. Who ever was able to look back upon his work and to say, as He did to His Father, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do"?[2] Then, consider how His Church has toiled for the conversion of sinners, for the edification of the faithful! What a Sisyphean labour has been hers, when she has made some great progress in her up-hill work, and then found her labour brought to naught by the indifference and sinfulness of the next generation, and has had to begin again. And this has been her history. Just as success seemed to crown her efforts, failure has set in, and the work has had to be done over again. If we have to toil, perhaps, at tasks which seem hopeless, our encouragement must be that the Ark of the covenant of the Lord has passed before us through this Jordan.

[1] Lam. i. 12. [2] S. John xvii. 4.

4. Is poverty our lot, with all its train of bitterness and humiliation? Who was poorer than our Master, Who had not where to lay His head? And His Church, though she has grown rich through the offerings of the faithful, has been robbed again and again of her riches by an unbelieving world, sometimes by her faithless children. But, whether in riches or poverty, she has ever been the home of the poor, the friend of the poor, ministering to their needs, teaching all her children that, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord."[1] If poverty be our lot, the Ark of the covenant of the Lord has passed before us through this Jordan.

5. And lastly, there is the river of death which we all have to cross. But death is robbed of its terrors because Jesus has died; the Ark of the covenant of the Lord has passed before us even through this Jordan. Jesus has died, and has risen again; and His Church ministers to the dying with her sacraments, comforting, cleansing, strengthening, in that last solemn hour, and then interceding for the soul which has passed over Jordan.

The priests with the Ark stood firm in the midst of Jordan till all had passed over. What a lesson of encouragement to us! None will be left to struggle alone. If we will only have the ministrations of Christ in His Church, those ministrations will never fail until all are safe in the promised land of heaven.

[1] Prov. xix. 17.

Sermon LXX.

PROVIDENCE, CHANCE, OR FATE?

(The First Sunday after Trinity.)

ACTS VIII. 26.

"And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert."

THESE words are the introduction to the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. Immediately after his work in Samaria had been brought to a close, S. Philip is sent southward to meet a traveller returning from Jerusalem, an Ethiopian eunuch, a man of wealth and authority, who was returning to his own country after worshipping at Jerusalem. He was sitting in his chariot, reading the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, the prophecy of our Lord's Passion. He was reading with interest, but without understanding what he read, when S. Philip, moved by the Holy Spirit, joined him, and showed how the prophecy was fulfilled in our Lord's death; and preaching unto him Jesus, baptized him, and sent him on his way to his own country—the first missionary of the Gospel in Ethiopia.

I. Such is the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. It throws light, among other things, on a question of the very highest interest and importance in regard to our life on earth. We are largely influenced by environment. Our life is often moulded or changed by circumstances over which we have no control. How are we to account for this? The history of the conversion of

the Ethiopian eunuch, with its far-reaching consequences, will enable us to test the various theories which have been proposed as explanations of this mysterious subject. These theories are three: That the circumstances of our life are the result of (1) providence, of (2) chance, or of (3) fate.

Some of the greatest results in our lives may frequently be traced back to the most insignificant circumstances. We miss a train, and so escape a railway accident. We choose one place rather than another for a holiday, and there meet someone who influences all our after life. We accidentally enter a Church, and hear a sermon which is GOD'S special message to our soul, revealing to us our vocation—GOD'S purpose for us. Such things, which seem to be traceable to mere accident, often change the whole course of our life and turn out to be in their effects the most fruitful incidents in our life.

We have a good example of this in the story of the Ethiopian eunuch. Looked at *apart* from GOD'S revelation, we might say he *chanced* to be returning from Jerusalem just at the moment when S. Philip crossed his path. He *chanced* also to be reading the prophecy of Isaiah and to be perplexed about it, when he *happened* to meet a man who was able to explain it to him.

From this combination of chances came the most momentous events of his life—his conversion and baptism—and their results were not confined to his life here, but changed his life for eternity. But more than this, they passed beyond him to those to whom he preached the Gospel of Christ in his far-off country, and whose conversion and Christian future, as we see, can all be traced to this casual meeting of two men on the highway between Jerusalem and Gaza.

A question arises in our minds, Was this the result of

a strange convergence of chance events, or is there a fate by which all things here below are ruled? Or yet again, is there a providence which guides the forces of this world?

1. The first theory, that all things happen by chance, represents this world of men and things as a fortuitous concourse of atoms which come accidentally into contact with one another. If such be the case, life is absolutely unmeaning and unworthy of noble effort. This opinion, however, that all things happen by chance, has commended itself to but very few of the human race, and therefore is scarcely worthy of our consideration.

2. The second solution of the mystery of life is that which is commonly called "Fatalism," and is the very reverse of the theory of chance, since it requires that all things in human life should be rigidly ordered by a Supreme Power —or GOD—of arbitrary character and relentless purpose. Such is the GOD of Mahomet, and, to a less degree, of Calvin, a GOD without moral attributes. According to this view, human life is without hope, for if all things are already ordered, and nothing depends upon our own effort or action, what is there to hope for?

Either of these theories, seriously contemplated and really believed in, is enough to drive a man out of his senses. To conceive of ourselves as beings endowed with the gifts of human nature, with the hopes and fears, with interests and possibilities, with the affections and ambitions of human life, and yet as the sport of blind chance, or the victims of relentless fate, is indeed intolerable if not impossible; for such a faith would sap the springs of all action, the strength of all effort, the purpose of every life.

There are religions, as we know, which teach fatalism, but their votaries accept its teaching probably at the sacrifice of intellectual consistency; for if they thought out its

consequences, life would be intolerable, if not impossible. They accept it for the most part as a theory which does not influence their lives, and they live on in spite of, not by the help of, the faith which they profess.

II. There is one other solution of the problem—that set forth by revelation, that which we call GOD'S providence. What does a belief in Providence involve:

First,—That "The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient: He sitteth between the Cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet."[1] His Sovereignty is Supreme, He rules over all things, but His rule is one of justice, and mercy, and love.

Again,—That He has created man in His own image, that He has endowed him with the God-like gifts of free-will and of sovereignty—of dominion over the earth. Man can use his gift of free-will in frustrating GOD'S loving purposes for *himself;* he can abuse his gift of sovereignty and dominion; but he will have to render an account one day of his stewardship of these gifts.

Then,—That GOD so loved man that He gave His only begotten Son to die for him, to redeem him, and through that Son gives him grace and power to accomplish the loving purposes for which he was created and to work out his own salvation.

Finally,—That as Supreme Ruler of this world GOD orders all things so that they shall work together for good to them that love Him.[2] That is, He gives to every one the opportunity which he needs for salvation, the opportunity of obtaining grace, of using grace; and more, He so orders the circumstances of each of us that they may really conduce to our eternal welfare. If He sends adversity, He sends with it grace to enable us to bear it,

[1] Psalm xcix. 1. [2] *Cf.* Rom. viii. 28.

and through it to develop the latent forces of our soul, to mould our characters for eternity.

A belief in GOD'S providence gives meaning to everything in life, to adversity as well as to prosperity, and stimulates us to effort that we may correspond with GOD'S Will, that we may use our opportunities, and so accomplish His gracious purposes for our good.

But to return to the story of the Ethiopian chamberlain. We regarded it before *apart* from revelation. Let us now examine it in the light of revelation. The chance meeting is arranged by GOD. An angel is sent to S. Philip when he is in Samaria to bid him go toward the south, unto the way or road that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert. Apparently no reason is vouchsafed to S. Philip. He is simply told to take a long journey to a part of the country in the south, where there would seem to be but little likelihood of any opening for missionary work. S. Philip obeys.

The eunuch passes him in his chariot, and the Spirit says to him, "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." Here it is no longer the angel, but the Holy Ghost within S. Philip, which impels him to join the Ethiopian.

Now observe the moment at which the meeting takes place. The eunuch is reading the prophecy of our Lord's Passion, his interest is aroused, but his mind is perplexed, —of whom does the prophet speak? Of himself, or of some other man? You see that S. Philip joined him at precisely the moment when his mind was ripe for instruction; and taking the opportunity afforded by the eunuch's question, S. Philip preaches to him Christ, and baptizes him.

Looked at from without, the conversion of the Ethiopian was the result of the convergence of several accidental

circumstances, was a combination, so to speak, of a number of chance events. But in the inspired account of it we are permitted to see GOD'S Hand bringing these things to pass, GOD'S providence arranging and ordering that meeting, GOD'S angel sending S. Philip into the neighbourhood of Gaza, GOD'S Holy Spirit impelling him to join the Ethiopian eunuch in his chariot.

III. May we not apply these principles to our own experience, and strive in them to recognize GOD'S loving care for us? Shall we not trace the important forces which have come into our own life, not to chance, but to GOD'S providence? Must we not believe that all things have been working together for good for us; and therefore examine how far we are trying to use the opportunities which GOD puts in our path—opportunities which are intended to enable us to know Him better, to serve Him more faithfully?

What quietness and strength should come into our lives as the result of a lively faith in GOD'S providence! Our Father in heaven is directing our lives, supplying our needs, guiding our steps with unerring judgment, with unfailing love, with Almighty power.

But before we close this Sermon we may learn a lesson from S. Philip in regard to our own work. How often we complain that our sphere of work is so uncongenial, our environment so unfavourable, our opportunities so limited! We think that if we had a better field of labour, a larger sphere of influence, we could do so much more for GOD; but as it is, we are discouraged, and perhaps do not even try earnestly to do the little that is within our reach.

Look at S. Philip. He had been preaching the Gospel at Samaria with great success. It was a large city, and there were many converts. But the angel sends him away

from this great sphere of usefulness to the south, to the road which leads from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert. How barren a field! Possibly a chance traveller, but no one else. And yet in converting an Ethiopian eunuch, and so laying the seeds of missionary enterprise in Ethiopia, S. Philip may have done more than in all his work in Samaria. He was sent to the desert, but GOD can make the desert to blossom as the rose.

There is a suggestive story in the life of S. Francis de Sales. On S. Stephen's Day, 1595, he went to preach in an old parish church near Allinges. It was very bad weather—a snow storm was raging—and only seven people came. One of his party suggested that it was not worth while to preach to so small an audience; but S. Francis replied, "One soul is as precious as a thousand." And he preached a most eloquent sermon, which converted one of his hearers, who turned out to be the magistrate of Thonon. And in this conversion he not only saved a soul, but laid the foundation of a great work in that neighbourhood.

We must not think that numbers are always a sign of success, or that the most promising field is necessarily the most fruitful. The only thing we need in our work is to seek to know the mind of GOD for us. We may not have an angel sent to reveal to us the work GOD has for us to do, but we may learn it as surely from GOD'S providence and from that Spirit of GOD Which is within us, and Which guides us to do GOD'S work and helps us to accomplish GOD'S Will.

Sermon LXXI.

JAEL.

(The Second Sunday after Trinity.)

JUDGES IV. 21.

"Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground, for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died."

OUR attention is drawn to-day to an action which, judged by the standards of Christianity, we must unhesitatingly pronounce to be an act of treachery and murder; but which, to the surprise and scandal of many, instead of reprobation, meets with unqualified praise from the prophetess Deborah in one of the great Magnificats of Holy Scripture. It will be interesting for us to look more closely into this as one of the moral difficulties of the Old Testament, not for the purpose of trying to show that such an act of treachery can be defended under the Christian law, but that we may set clearly before us the facts of the case and may understand why the murder of Sisera received the approbation of Deborah, even though we must still ourselves condemn the treachery of Jael.

I. We must begin by examining the position which Jael occupied towards the two nations which were contending in battle. Jael was a Kenite, not a Canaanite. The Kenites were founded by Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses, were connected by affinity with Israel, and were followers of the Israelitish migration into Canaan. They were, moreover, hereditary worshippers of the GOD of

Israel. It is true that there was peace between the house of Heber the Kenite, the husband of Jael, and Jabin, King of Hazor. And herein lies the principal moral difficulty, and Holy Scripture squarely calls our attention to it by stating this fact. But ought there to have been such a covenant of peace?—Most certainly not. We are told that Heber had separated himself from the Kenites and had pitched his tent near Kedesh. He had, therefore, made peace with his nation's bitterest foe; and it is well for us to keep this in mind as possibly a factor in Jael's treatment of Sisera.

Another element which must be taken into consideration before we pass judgment upon Jael is the contrast between the Canaanites and the Israelites. As an ally of Canaan Jael was brought into contact with idolatry, cruelty, and abominations of every kind. Indeed, so depraved were the Canaanites that contemporary history shows that God's fiat for their destruction was a mercy to mankind.

And if Jael was an observant person, what a contrast to this she must have seen in the nation her husband had deserted—the nation of Israel, to which he was bound by every family tie. Instead of idolatry, she beheld the pure worship of a pure Spirit, the one God, Jehovah. Instead of cruelty and political injustice, such as we come across in Adoni-bezek, who kept under his table seventy kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off;[1] instead of a people crushed under a grinding tyranny, such as that of Jabin, King of Hazor, she found in Israel a civil government which had a model constitution, a free community existing for the good of all its members, a community in which cruelty and injustice and tyranny were unknown.

Jael knew, of course, the later history of Israel, its

[1] *Cf.* Judges i. 7.

deliverance from Egypt, its religious migration, the miraculous entrance into Canaan, with the Ark going before through the Jordan, and the command of God to exterminate the Canaanites, making the struggle between Israel and Canaan a holy war. This war, which had begun under Joshua's leadership, had never been brought to a close. It was still in its later stages. So that to Jael Israel represented truth and righteousness, the cause of the God Whom she had been brought up to worship; while the Canaanite represented the cause of falsehood and evil.

II. Further, a divine command had just come to Israel through their prophetess Deborah—the command to make war upon Jabin and the Canaanites. A divine decree had gone forth for the destruction of Sisera and his army. Jael knew of this, and, though her husband had entered into covenant with the Canaanites, she may have felt herself under the same obligation to execute this command as Deborah and the other Israelites did. It is true, there was peace between Heber and Jabin, King of Hazor, but this peace was treachery to Israel. It is never right to do wrong; the end does not justify the means. And yet in time of war who would blame the wife of a traitor for choosing her country before her husband's wicked friend? The battle is fought, Sisera is routed and flees to Jael's tent. The ceremonious reverence with which he is treated is probably nothing more than what oriental politeness required. The language of eastern hyperbole which Jael used, and which we find again and again in Holy Scripture, very likely meant no more than society compliments do in our own day, though expressed in stronger language than we should use.

Sisera, fleeing for his life, stood before her. To have refused to receive him, to have upbraided him for his past cruelty, to have acknowledged herself a patriot, and there-

fore his enemy, would have meant for her instant death; for Sisera would have struck her down. She therefore dissembles, invites him to do what she saw he was determined to do—to enter her tent—and at his command watches at the tent door while he sleeps. Possibly, up to that moment, she may not have intended to kill him. But as he sleeps and she watches she has time to think of the cruel slavery to which Israel had been subjected, of the wickedness of Sisera and his master Jabin.

The Israelites have defeated the Canaanites. But in those days the defeat of an army was a small matter compared to the death of its leader. From the history, Jabin the King seems to have been a mere figurehead. Sisera, the captain of the host, was the real leader. To have defeated the army, if Sisera escaped, was of little use. In a few months he would return with a mightier army. But to kill Sisera was to crush the tyrant and deliver Israel from oppression. A divine decree she knew had gone out, that Sisera was to be destroyed. And it came over her, perhaps, as she stood there watching, that she might be the instrument of his destruction, that she might be the deliverer of Israel. At once acting upon the impulse she takes a nail of the tent, one of the great pins with which it was fastened to the ground, and a hammer, and as he sleeps smites the nail into his temples and kills him.

And Deborah in her song of triumph proclaims, "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent."[1]

III. We have now all the circumstances of Jael's action before us, and what judgment are we to pronounce upon it? There can be no doubt that, judged by the standard of Christian morality, it must fail. Treachery, murder

[1] Judges v. 24.

and falsehood never can be justified. But to judge Jael's conduct by the principles of Christian ethics is to judge it by a standard of which she was absolutely ignorant. We have to recognize that the Old Testament dispensation was, in morals, an accommodation to man's weakness. It was a code immeasurably superior to the moral systems of the nations around Israel; and, further, it was a preparation for something much higher—the perfect moral code promulgated by our blessed Lord, the ethics of Christianity, but it was in itself an imperfect code.

If, however, we desire a judgment upon Jael's action as viewed from the standpoint of the morals of her day, we have this judgment in the utterance of Deborah, and it is altogether favourable to Jael—"Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent."

It is difficult for us to realize two great factors in Jael's conduct which had much to do with the entire approbation it met with on the part of Israel; for the words of the prophetess Deborah doubtless voiced the opinion of her day. These two factors were, the entire absence, in that age, of the recognition of the rights of the individual, and the non-existence of any obligation of *absolute* truthfulness.

The rights of the individual were merged in the family; so that all the individuals in a family were often punished by death for the sin of one member. Indeed, it is only in modern times that the rights of the individual have reached their full recognition, and they have even been exaggerated; so that we see in our own day a reaction in the direction of socialism.

Truthfulness, too, was not an absolute duty under the law; for it was limited by the relationship of neighbour. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neigh-

bour,"[1] said the Law; but no obligation was recognized to speak the truth to an enemy. So that the treachery of Jael's act must be judged from the standpoint of whether she regarded Sisera as a friend or an enemy. If the latter, the action was, as Deborah pronounced it, in accordance with the moral standard of her time. And though it may be pointed out that the covenant of peace between Heber and Sisera entitled the latter to the treatment of a friend, yet, as we have tried to show, patriotism was as keen in Jael's day as in our own; and the impulse of patriotism, inspiring her to seize the opportunity to deliver her country from its oppressor, evidently in her mind, and in that of Deborah, outweighed the obligations of truthfulness and friendship.

It is worthy of note that S. Paul, in enjoining the duty of absolute truth, puts it upon the ground that by the Incarnation we have become members one of another. He says, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another."[2] The obligation to speak the truth to one's neighbour was recognized under the law; for S. Paul is quoting the words of the prophet Zechariah, "Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour";[3] but he adds, "for we are members one of another." That is, the obligation is no longer national, but universal, since in Christ the brotherhood of man is realized.

The moral difficulties of the Old Testament teach us God's condescension to man's weakness in giving him a law adapted to the stage of moral development of that age; and though this law is imperfect, it is justified as containing in itself the germ of a higher morality, and as preparing the world for the perfect teachings of Christ.

[1] Exodus xx. 16. [2] Eph. iv. 25. [3] Zech. viii. 16.

Sermon LXXII.

THE CONVERT'S QUESTION.

(The Second Sunday after Trinity.)

ACTS IX. 6.

"And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

AMONG the most intensely interesting psychological phenomena in the world's history, and among the most valuable evidences to the power and truth of Christianity, stands the conversion of S. Paul. We have no less than three accounts of it in the Acts, in chapters ix., xxii., and xxvi., besides an allusion to it in the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians.[1] Next to our Lord's Passion it is the most prominent event in the New Testament, if measured by the fulness of its record.

But not only do we know, with great minuteness of detail, the story of the conversion; we know also the history of the convert. Indeed, there is scarcely anyone who has ever lived who is so well known as S. Paul. We have read his biography, written by his friend and companion S. Luke, and his autobiography in his epistles. We feel, therefore, that we know S. Paul—his character so strong and noble, his intellect so tremendously powerful, his heart so sympathetic! S. Paul stands out not only as the greatest man of his age, but perhaps the greatest that the world has ever known, and certainly the one who more than any has succeeded in revealing himself through his writings.

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 8.

But we not only know what kind of man S. Paul was; we know also how deeply rooted was his prejudice against Christianity, a prejudice which was the result of a strongly religious and patriotic character, trained to despise and hate Christianity, as threatening alike the honour of his religion and the unique claim of his nation to be GOD'S people.

And this was the man who in a moment, by GOD'S special interposition, was changed from a persecutor to a believer, from an enemy to a friend. This change too involved the giving up of all that was most dear to such a man, and the embracing of a life of hardship and toil, in which the convert persevered to the very day of his death!

I. The questions which S. Paul's conversion suggest are many and deeply important. Let us confine ourselves to one, to the fruit of his conversion as manifested at once in the question he asks—"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and afterwards in the kind of life he leads.

First, let us consider what we mean by conversion. Conversion is a turning of the will to GOD, it is an act of free-will; for it must be a turning, not from compulsion, but from conviction. Conversion is not merely a change of mind (although the intellect must be convinced); but the intellectual conclusion must be grasped by the will and become a moral conviction, and so take possession of the whole man. Conversion, therefore, involves change of life; for it implies both a new motive and a new direction to life.

There are some mistakes about conversion against which we must carefully be on our guard. We must not confound it with regeneration. Regeneration is a grace given through the Sacrament of Baptism, by which we are born anew—born of the Spirit. Conversion is the result of

grace, but in itself it is an act of the will. We find that after S. Paul's conversion he was baptized by Ananias, and so received the grace of regeneration. The two were entirely distinct, and conversion in no sense supplied the place of regeneration or rendered Baptism unnecessary.

Again, conversion is not everything in the spiritual life; it is only the first step, though a very important step, as our Lord shows us when He says to His disciples, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."[1] Conversion, as we have said, is a turning of the will to GOD. Before conversion the will is turned away from GOD, turned to the world, or to self, or to sin of some sort; and it is evident that the first step must be a turning round in the direction of GOD and heaven. But if after this turning we stand still, we shall never get to heaven, we shall never reach GOD. So that, important as conversion is, we must not think, as some people do, that when a person has been converted he is therefore secure of salvation.

Yet again, we must not think that there is only one kind of conversion—instantaneous conversion like S. Paul's. Some few are converted in this manner; more persons, however, are converted gradually.

Some few souls have great spiritual experiences which cause them at once to break off from sin or from worldliness, and to turn to GOD; but with others there is a gradual turning—not a renouncing the world all at once, but gradually, a growth in the knowledge and love of GOD. And these as they grow, give up more and more those things which are displeasing to GOD, and which hinder them in their Christian course.

Souls often experience, and indeed require, more than

[1] S. Matt. xviii. 3.

one conversion. They turn to God, but not with the tremendous self-surrender of S. Paul, and after awhile they are more or less drawn back towards the world and need to make another effort of turning or conversion. So that we see that conversion sometimes happens more than once in the spiritual life.

Then again, conversion affects people differently; some it influences for life, others only for a little time. This depends chiefly on the strength of character in the individual, and in the thoroughness of his conversion.

II. And this brings us back to the point we are to consider—the fruit or immediate effect of S. Paul's conversion as shown by the question he asked, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

This question implied the most unhesitating and absolute self-surrender. S. Paul made no conditions, imposed no limitations, simply devoted himself entirely to the service of Christ. Here we have a test of conversion, whether it be entire or only partial. There are some who when they turn to God are ready to give up a little for Him, and to undertake some work in His service; but they are not prepared to surrender their lives wholly to His guidance, and to accept His commandments as the very law of their conduct. S. Paul was not one of these; his conversion was entire. The whole might of his intellect accepted the teachings of Christ; the whole strength of his will was prepared to give effect to them. He only asked for guidance, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

In connection with this question we may notice three things:

1. Our Lord's answer, "It shall be told thee what thou must do." S. Paul must be instructed; and the instruction is given by an ordinary priest of the Church, Ananias.

Our Lord does not, on account of S. Paul's exalted position and great learning, send an apostle to teach him, but only an ordinary disciple who happened to be at Damascus. S. Paul received his instruction with humility; and thus we are taught that this virtue is one of the first fruits of conversion. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children," our Lord said, setting a little child in their midst as an example of humility.

2. "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake." Christ does not put before S. Paul how great things he would *accomplish* for His Name's sake, but how great things he must *suffer*. He did not tell him that the fame of his conversion and the greatness of his work should be known in every age and every clime, although this would have been true; but He told him how great things he must suffer; He told him to count the cost of taking up the yoke of His service, not that he might refuse it, but that he might face the difficulties, that he might weigh in the balances of his mind the sacrifice demanded, and realize all that was involved in Christ's service, and take up his cross and follow Him. That S. Paul did this we know; for in after life he writes to the Galatians, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."[1]

3. "He received sight forthwith . . . and was baptized." After being instructed by Ananias, after being taught by our Lord Himself what was involved in accepting Christianity, S. Paul was baptized; he used, that is, the ordinary means of grace to begin his spiritual life; he received the grace of regeneration. Some persons, not in our Church, have argued that his conversion was so

[1] Gal. vi. 14.

entirely a miraculous act that it superseded, or did away with, the necessity of Baptism. S. Paul did not regard it in this light. He used then, and throughout his life, all the means of grace, all the Sacraments of the Church.

And again we see the lasting effects of his conversion in his manner of life ever afterwards, in the zeal with which he laboured, in the patience with which he suffered, in the love of Christ which constrained him to such acts of heroism, in the martyrdom by which he willingly sealed his witness with his blood.

III. But what has all this to do with us? Surely the conversion of S. Paul is recorded in Holy Scripture with wealth of detail, and is thrice repeated, not merely that we may study it as an interesting psychological phenomenon, but that we may learn from it an important spiritual lesson, that it may serve as a test of the reality and lasting effects of our own conversion. Which way are we going —heavenward, or away from heaven? Whither is our will directed—to GOD, or to the things of the world? On what are our affections fixed—on the treasures of earth, or of heaven?

Do we need conversion? All need it who are not going heavenward, who are not walking in the narrow path which leads to the straight gate by which we enter heaven. Conversion can happen more than once in our lives. Do we need to be converted again? Once, we perhaps remember, we had an experience of deep spiritual import, may be more or less like S. Paul's, when we did turn and give ourselves to GOD, when we set our faces stedfastly towards heaven. Are we persevering in the course we then took? Have we kept the resolutions we then made? Is our will still directed straight towards GOD? The will often needs redirecting. The temptations of the world, the flesh and

the devil, constantly draw our wills, almost without our knowledge, more or less aside from the right way. We need from time to time to re-direct our will to GOD.

We can test ourselves by S. Paul's question, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Can we say this without conditions, without limitations? If we can ask this question in loving faith and real self-surrender, then there can be no doubt about our spiritual life, about the way in which we are going—the way of happiness; for none are so happy now as those who have given themselves up altogether to GOD'S service, altogether to do GOD'S will; and none can be so happy in eternity as those who have served Him thus in time, and whom He will welcome to their home in heaven, with the words, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." [1]

Sermon LXXIII.

A MOTHER'S GIFT TO GOD.

(The Third Sunday after Trinity.)

1 SAMUEL II. 26.

"And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men."

THE lesson for to-day begins with Hannah's Magnificat, her inspired thanksgiving for GOD'S goodness in answering prayer. How many pray for things on which they have set their heart; how few, like Hannah, return thanks for prayer

[1] S. Matt. xxv. 34.

answered. And Hannah not only returned thanks in words, but brought a thank-offering to GOD. And the offering she brought was the best she had, the most precious of all her possessions.

Her heart's desire, her prayer, had been that she might have a child. And when GOD granted her request and she had the child, she at once dedicated him to GOD'S service, and at the very earliest moment brought him to GOD'S priest to be trained in that service. That Hannah was a loving mother we cannot doubt, and yet she was an unselfish one. She did not think of her child as belonging only to herself, she did not keep him merely to minister to her delight; but at the earliest fitting age she brought him to GOD.

Surely she might have argued with herself that her son Samuel was so young that he would be safer under her care for many years; that he could be given to the Lord when he was grown up; or that he could be left to choose GOD'S service, if he were so inclined, when he came to manhood. She might have argued thus. Probably most mothers do. Hannah did not. She brought him to GOD. And what was the result?—For Hannah, that her name is emblazoned upon the pages of the Church's saints; for her son Samuel, that he became one of the great men of the world's history, a blessing to his nation, an example to the Church of all ages. This was the reward of a mother's unselfish love, of a woman's splendid thank-offering to GOD.

I. Samuel was born in an age of transition, and he was GOD'S instrument in a twofold change, from the rule of judges to that of prophets, and from a theocracy to a monarchy. Samuel was the last of the judges, and the first of the prophets, and Samuel at GOD'S command

anointed the first King of Israel. For many years he was the one great man in the nation, influencing the character of the people, counselling them and their king in times of great difficulty, teaching them the way of the Lord; and in his old age he challenges them to show one selfish or corrupt act in his long administration. He was a great man, and he was a good man, and it will repay us to investigate some of the causes of his power and of his success.

He had good parents we know—no small blessing for any man. Hannah was indeed a holy and unselfish mother, and Elkanah, her husband, a pious man. But while we acknowledge this inheritance as a force in the development of his character, there were other forces to which he owed as much if not more—forces of environment—in other words, the training he received for his work. In it we may trace three distinct elements:

1. There was his home training, his mother's influence. Hannah devoted herself entirely to her duties as a mother. She did not come up again to Shiloh till she brought her child to offer to the Lord. Meanwhile, with what care she watched over him; and not only with care, but with many prayers. Samuel was indeed a child of prayer. Elkanah, his father, acquiesced in Hannah's vow to dedicate the child to the special service of God. And even after Samuel was delivered up to the charge of Eli, his mother probably still influenced him, certainly by her prayers, and on the occasion of her visits to Shiloh. While Samuel's home training was very brief, it was of the best.

2. Then came his training under the direction of Eli. Later on we find Samuel himself gathering around him youths at Naioth for educational purposes, and quite possibly there may have been schools at Shiloh under the direction of the priests, to whom learning was practically

confined. Of this stage of his training we know nothing in detail, but it is not a little suggestive that the thread of the narrative is broken in no less than six places to call our attention to Samuel's progress. We read, "And the child did minister unto the Lord before Eli the priest."[1] "But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod."[2] "And the child Samuel grew before the Lord."[3] "And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men."[4] "And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli."[5] "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground."[6] There must have been something very wonderful in the progress of this child, that the story should be interrupted every few verses to draw attention to it.

3. The third element in his training was the evil example of Eli's own sons. The picture of their iniquity is drawn in the blackest colours. While Eli seems to have been faithful in the training of Samuel, his own children are a deplorable example of his weakness and sinful neglect.

This is not an uncommon case. There are many parents whose ordinary good judgment is warped, if not entirely perverted, by their foolish fondness for their children. They are blind to their children's faults, until these faults have grown too great to be conquered. They cannot bear to punish, until punishment is of no avail. And so, while they might bring up other people's children well, as Eli trained Samuel, they altogether fail with their own; and their failure must be regarded not merely as a misfortune to be pitied, but as a sin to be condemned; for GOD held Eli responsible for the wickedness of his sons.

[1] 1 Sam. ii. 11. [2] ii. 18. [3] ii. 21. [4] ii. 26. [5] iii. 1. [6] iii. 19.

Some may say, In what way was the evil example of Eli's sons a factor in the splendid development of Samuel's character? It was that adverse environment, which, if rightly met, is such a great factor in the formation of a great character. Samuel learned early to recognize evil, to resist temptation, to conquer it, and to hate sin. The shameful example of Eli's sons only made Samuel more careful to keep near to God, to avoid the occasions of sin which they so eagerly sought.

II. This story of Hannah and Samuel is read once a year in the Church's lessons. Ought it not to be pondered over and studied prayerfully by every mother? "Children are a gift that cometh of the Lord";[1] a great blessing, but a tremendous responsibility; a great blessing to their parents in many ways; a great joy, but an immense responsibility. They are given, that they may be brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord, that from their earliest years they may be trained in God's service. They are to grow up to be the men and women of the next generation, a blessing or a curse, a force for good or evil in the world; and much, very much, depends upon their home training, upon their parents' unselfish love and wisdom.

How earnestly in prayer should the mother seek wisdom to bring up her child aright! How often should she ponder not only upon her responsibility, but upon the possibilities of her child's future! What are a mother's ambitions for her child? What should they be? That he may be great in the world's eyes, or in the eyes of God? That he may be successful in winning the prizes of this world, or that he may be useful in his generation, a blessing to his fellowmen?

[1] *Cf.* Psalm cxxvii. 4.

A Mother's Gift to God.

Your child, O mother, came from GOD, belongs to GOD. His happiness here and hereafter depends upon his fulfilling GOD's purpose, doing GOD's Will. Do you realize this? Is this the object you have in view for him? Is this your hope and ambition?

Amongst the paths in life which offer themselves to a man to-day, how many mothers or fathers think of the path which Hannah and her husband desired for their firstborn child—to serve GOD in the Sanctuary as a priest? We hear much in our day of the falling off in number of candidates for Holy Orders, and of the deterioration in the material which is available. Would this be so if every mother read and prayerfully pondered the story of Hannah and Samuel?

If you could project yourself forward into the generation which succeeds not only your own but your son's day, to a few years after his death, and from that point of time look back upon his life, which would you prefer—that he should have left a noble record of unselfish work done for GOD and for his fellowmen, written on the pages of the world's history, and a name written in heaven in the Book of Life; or that he should have gone to the grave accompanied by the trappings of this world's wealth—not one penny of which he could carry with him—that his name should be remembered for a brief period, as one who made a great deal of money, or won a great deal of fame, but whose life made the world no better, and whose future is left in gravest doubt?

Which would you prefer, to be the mother of such a son as this, or the mother of a son like Samuel, one who grew in favour with GOD and man, who was GOD's instrument in blessing his nation, and who is numbered among GOD's saints in glory everlasting?

Sermon LXXIV.

CORNELIUS, THE CENTURION.

(The Third Sunday after Trinity.)

ACTS X. 1, 2.

"There was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared GOD with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to GOD alway."

FEW, probably, realize the importance to the religious history of the world of the event which is related at such length in the tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles—the story of the admission of Cornelius the centurion into the Church of Christ. It would not be too much to say that this was one of the great turning points in the history of revealed religion; for it was the authoritative recognition of the equality of the Gentiles, and their formal admission into the Christian Church.

Other Gentiles who were proselytes of the gate had, perhaps, been baptized before Cornelius; indeed, the Ethiopian eunuch is an instance of this. But that which gives to the baptism of Cornelius its unique importance is the solemn and authoritative character of the step taken by S. Peter, as the chief of the apostles, after a special vision from GOD had prepared him for this action.

How great a revolution this was, is often overlooked as we read the story told in The Acts. From the call of Abram to the death of Christ, the covenanted mercies of GOD and His divine revelation had been restricted to the Hebrew race. The time was now come when the river of

revealed truth, which so long had flowed between the narrow banks of Judaism, was to burst those banks and to flood the whole world with its life-giving waters.

The banks of a river are necessary that it may gain volume and depth; without them, instead of a river, we should have a marsh; and the water, instead of flowing on towards the ocean, fertilizing the country through which it passes, would be sucked up and absorbed by the marsh. Thus GOD'S revelation needed for a long period to be confined to one race, until the fulness of the time was come when GOD sent forth His Son, Who was the Truth, Who came to bear witness to the Truth; and when His work was done, the restrictions of racial privilege were no longer helps but hindrances to the spread of Truth; and so they were removed, and the river of revealed Truth fertilized the whole world.

I. So great an event was prepared for by GOD'S providence, and inaugurated with due authority and solemnity. We may trace the work of this providence in preparing both the great actors, S. Peter and Cornelius, for the part they were to play; though neither had probably any consciousness of the far-reaching consequences of their action.

As in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, so here we are permitted to see GOD'S providence at work in bringing about the event. Of the immediate preparation, we are explicitly told, that an angel was sent to Cornelius, a vision to S. Peter. Of the more remote preparation, of Cornelius at least, we may also gather some hints.

Cornelius in a vision sees an angel of GOD coming to him, and is assured by the heavenly messenger that his prayers and alms have come up as a memorial before GOD, and that therefore his soul's desire is to be fulfilled.

There is little doubt that Cornelius was a proselyte of the gate; and therefore, while free from the obligations of the Mosaic Law, that he believed in the God of Israel.

From the message of the angelic visitor, we may gather that his prayer had been for light, for clearer knowledge of God, and for guidance in his religious life. The means by which he is to obtain this is revealed to him. He is to send messengers to Joppa, for one Simon, surnamed Peter, lodging in the house of Simon the tanner, by the sea side, and S. Peter will tell him what he is to do.

We cannot but be struck by the similarity in the answers to the questions of Cornelius and Saul. Saul in his vision asks, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And the answer is, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."[1] Cornelius asks, "What is it, Lord?" And he is told to send for S. Peter, who will tell him what he ought to do. Both need instruction, and in both cases the instruction is to come through the ministry of the Church.

S. Peter's preparation for his part in the great event is likewise through a vision. The next day, just before the messengers arrived at Joppa, S. Peter, who had been spending some time in fasting and prayer, fell into a trance, and "saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call

[1] Acts ix. 6.

not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven."

While S. Peter is doubting what this vision means, the messengers from Cornelius arrive; and the Spirit tells him to go with them. Thus we see that both parties to this great event were directly prepared for it by visions, by an angel of GOD, and by the Holy Spirit.

S. Peter goes with the messengers, hears the narrative of the vision of Cornelius, tells of his own experience, and instructs Cornelius in the leading truths of Christianity. He tells him of our Lord's life, and death, and resurrection; and that He is ordained to be Judge of the quick and the dead; and that through Him is the remission of sins.

In short, S. Peter briefly instructed Cornelius and his friends in the Christian Creed; and while he was speaking, the Holy Ghost fell upon them, manifesting His presence by the gift of tongues. Then they were baptized, and thus formally admitted into the Church of Christ.

At this point we may call attention to the fact that though S. Paul, whose conversion is recorded in the previous chapter, was to be the apostle to the Gentiles, the privilege of opening the door of the Church to them was reserved for S. Peter; and this in accordance with our Lord's promise, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven."[1] Here first, then, S. Peter exercised his privilege of opening the kingdom of heaven to Gentile believers.

II. In addition to the direct intervention of GOD by means of the angelic vision, we may trace a more remote preparation in the life of Cornelius, fitting him for the great privilege of being the firstfruits of the Gentile world.

[1] S. Matt. xvi. 19.

Indeed, we are explicitly told that the vision and all that followed was GOD's response to the prayers and alms of Cornelius. In this preparation we may notice four points:

1. First, the effects of discipline in the life of Cornelius. The age in which he lived was one of very great luxury. The wealth of conquered lands had been poured into Rome, and followed everywhere in the steps of the Roman power. Cæsarea, where Cornelius was stationed, was the seat of the Roman Government. It was situated in the borders of Phœnicia, in a north-westerly direction from Jerusalem, and about thirty miles from Joppa. It had originally been built by Herod the Great, who spent twelve years in erecting it, constructing a great harbour, with vast expenditure of money and labour. When the Romans took possession of Palestine they developed Herod's plans, and made Cæsarea the permanent residence of the Procurator. While there was a considerable Jewish population, it was entirely a Gentile city, filled with heathen temples, theatres, and amphitheatres—a place of wealth and luxury.

Almost the only discipline which existed in those days was the discipline of the Roman soldier, and this discipline seems to have been a great moral factor in preparing men to accept the faith of Christ; for it can scarcely have been accidental that all four of the Roman centurions mentioned in the New Testament were favourable to Christianity. They were the centurion of whom our Lord said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel";[1] the centurion at the Cross, who bore witness, saying, "Truly this was the Son of GOD";[2] the centurion Julius, who kindly entreated S. Paul, and on one occasion saved his life;[3] and the centurion Cornelius.

Self-discipline is always a predisposing cause of faith,

[1] S. Matt. viii. 10. [2] S. Matt. xxvii. 54. [3] *Cf.* Acts xxvii. 1, 43.

as the lack of self-discipline is generally the predisposing cause of unbelief; for a very large proportion of those who have lost their faith began through sin by losing grace.

2. Again, Cornelius was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house." The word (εὐσεβής) translated "devout," like its Latin equivalent (pius), sometimes signifies a right relation towards God, sometimes the right fulfilment of duties imposed by family ties. In the case of Cornelius it includes both, since we are told that he "feared God with all his house." His religion influenced his whole life, and led him to fulfil the duties of a master to his servants in caring for their religious life. He "feared God with all his house."

3. Then, he "gave much alms to the people." Almsgiving is an excellent test of devotion. A charity which never manifests itself in almsgiving is not the charity of Christ or of His Church. The test of His service which our Lord demanded in His parable of the Judgment was the fulfilment of the corporal works of mercy, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, ministering to the sick, and so on. The angel tells Cornelius that his prayers and alms have come up as a memorial before God. Almsgiving and prayer should go together. We find them thus associated in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. And where they are separated, it often indicates that prayer is the outcome of selfish needs rather than of devotion, and that almsgiving proceeds from mere philanthropy.

4. Lastly, Cornelius "prayed to God alway." Cornelius was a man of prayer, a man with whom prayer was not only an occasional incident in his life, but the very atmosphere of that life. We have seen, too, that his prayer was associated with the practical duties of religion—almsgiving, and the right ordering of his household in the fear

of God. Such prayer is always acceptable to God. In the case of Cornelius it reached the Throne of Grace, and in response to it an angel was sent with a message from God, and an apostle came to instruct him in the fulness of God's revelation.

While studying the story of Cornelius as a most interesting episode, and indeed a turning point in the history of the Church, we may learn from it many practical lessons for the ordering of our own lives, none, perhaps, of more importance than that almsgiving and prayer come up before God as a memorial, and bring down from God an answer of blessing and peace.

Sermon LXXV.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

(The Fourth Sunday after Trinity.)

1 Samuel xii. 23.

"Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

THE love of Christ towards us is manifested chiefly in two ways. He "suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps";[1] and "He ever liveth to make intercession"[2] for us. And as He has called us to follow His steps of suffering, to take up our cross and bear it after Him, so does He invite us to share in His work of intercession.

Love is essentially unselfish, and it therefore manifests

[1] 1 S. Peter ii. 21. [2] Heb. vii. 25.

itself in gladly suffering for those we love, and in earnestly praying for them. Intercessory prayer, inasmuch as it is founded upon love, is absolutely unselfish. We pray for ourselves, for the things we need, for the gifts we desire, for help in our difficulties, for comfort in our sorrows, for strength to meet our temptations, for success in our undertakings; but in every one of these prayers there is a possible element of selfishness. In intercessory prayer, in prayer for others, there is no selfishness, because such prayer is inspired by the spirit of love.

I. Intercessory prayer is not only a privilege; it is also a duty, and to neglect it is to commit grievous sin. This we are taught by the words of Samuel, "Moreover as for me, GOD forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." To give up intercessory prayer, even under the greatest discouragements, is sin, even when, as in Samuel's case, those for whom he prayed disregarded his advice, and by their action rebelled against GOD.

S. Paul takes care to assure the Christians at Colossæ that he fulfilled this duty; for he writes to them, "We also . . . do not cease to pray for you."[1] And our Lord Jesus Christ Himself on the last night of His life, before He entered Gethsemane and began His great struggle for the world's salvation, found time for intercessory prayer; for His great high-priestly prayer, recorded in the 17th chapter of S. John, was largely made up of intercession: "I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me"; "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word."[2]

[1] Col. i. 9. [2] S. John xvii. 9, 15, 20.

1. It may help us to realize the importance of intercessory prayer if we consider its dignity. And what work can be of greater dignity than that on which our Lord is ceaselessly engaged in His life of glory in heaven?

It is the high-priestly work of Christ. Just as the High Priest on the Day of Atonement entered into the Holy of holies, to appear in the presence of God, and to make intercession for the people in the power of the sacrifice which he had just offered, so our great High Priest has entered into the Holy of holies, not made with hands—heaven itself—through His own Blood, that in the power of the Sacrifice Which He offered once for all upon the Cross He might appear before God for us, might present that continual act of intercession which is the fruit of His act of sacrifice.

But not only is it the one work of our Lord in glory, it is the work in which all His saints in heaven are engaged. They compass us about as a great cloud of witnesses, and they plead our needs in union with our Lord's intercession, and through His merits, before the throne of God.

Yet again, it is one of the principal works of the Church on earth. How prominent a place is given to intercession in the daily prayers of the Church. Indeed, the Divine Office, the Daily Matins and Evensong, is the priest's intercession for his parish and for the Catholic Church. But above all, that supreme act of worship by which God is most glorified and man most blessed—the offering of the Eucharistic Sacrifice—is the special means by which the intercessions of the Church on earth are not only linked with intercessions of the saints in heaven, but with the intercession of the great High Priest at the right hand of the Father, Who ever liveth to make intercession.

What work, then, can possibly have the dignity which

belongs to the work of intercession, founded upon unselfish love, a duty enjoined by the highest authority, and itself the continuous work of Christ Himself in heaven?

2. Then again, to stimulate us in the work of intercession, we are taught by Holy Scripture not only its dignity but its efficacy—"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."[1] Or, as it might be more literally translated, The prayer of a righteous man availeth much in its working. That is, it not only works, but works with great power, according to the Will of God, Who has revealed His Will to us, that we should pray for one another. We have examples of its efficacy in the intercession of Abraham for Sodom, of Lot for Zoar,[2] and of Job for his three friends.[3]

3. Lastly, we must consider the necessity of intercessory prayer. It not only possesses a transcendent dignity as associated with our Lord's work in heaven, and a peculiar efficacy as shown in Holy Scripture, but it is absolutely necessary for the well-being of the Church and of its members. There are many blessings which God wills to give us which depend upon prayer; so that if we neglect intercession we practically frustrate God's loving purpose, which depends in some cases upon our co-operation through prayer.

To neglect intercession is to hold aloof from the life and work of the Church. It is to bury in the earth the best talent God has given us, to refuse to use one of the principal means by which we may be of service to our fellow-men.

And yet, how many do neglect intercessory prayer almost entirely! They pray for themselves, for their own needs. They are driven to such prayer by selfishness. The prayer which flows from love—how seldom it is used!

[1] S. James v. 16. [2] *Cf.* Gen. xviii. and xix. [3] Job xlii. 8.

It is confined, perhaps, to the mere perfunctory recitation of one, "Our Father." And, indeed, we cannot say the Lord's Prayer without intercession; for every petition is for others as well as for ourselves; for others, for all our brethren; yes, for all GOD'S children. This we imply when we say, "*Our* Father," "Give *us*," "Forgive *us*," "Lead *us*," "Deliver *us*."

II. The duty of intercessory prayer should be systematically practised, we should set aside a certain definite time for it. In addition to adding to our ordinary prayers, as we probably do every morning and evening, some few intercessions for those who are related to us by special ties, we should also take a certain time for the fulfilment of our duty and privilege of joining in the great intercession for the Church at large. For this purpose it is advisable to make out a list of subjects for which we desire to pray.

1. Our relations, natural and spiritual.

2. Our parish and its various works, for the sick and suffering among us.

3. For the Catholic Church in her great struggle with the world and sin.

4. For different classes who are in sorrow, temptation, or danger; for those in mortal sin, that they may repent; for those in great temptation, that they may have grace to resist; for those in sorrow, that they may be comforted; for those in difficulties, that they may be guided and strengthened; for those in doubt about the Faith, that they may be enlightened by the Holy Ghost.

5. For the heathen, that they may be brought to a knowledge of Christ; and therefore for all the various missionary agencies of the Church.

These are mere outlines of subjects, which can be filled

in and amplified according to our own special interests and the amount of time which we can devote to intercession.

You may notice that we have begun with those nearest to us in the claims of relationship, our own kin; and in each division have gone out farther from ourselves, until we have ended, in the last class, with the heathen, with those who are not yet Christians.

If we were to take but five minutes each day, and each day to take up some one class, how much we should accomplish, not only for others, but in fulfilling our own duty, and so strengthening our spiritual lives.

Each day spend a minute or two in thinking of the special needs of those for whom you are going to pray, then say one or two collects from the Prayer Book, some prayers in your own words, or the Lord's Prayer.

This is a work in which invalids may sometimes do more for the Church than those who are in strong health, and who, because they have many active duties, have little time which they can devote to intercessory prayer. But those of weak health, perhaps confined to a sick room, or at least able to go out very little, and to do no active work for the Church, what a wonderful opportunity they have of engaging in this great work of intercession, of joining not only with the saints in heaven, but with our Lord Jesus Christ in His life in glory. Do not bury your talent in the earth; use it, and you will find at the last that you have gained other talents.

Remember the words of Samuel, "GOD forbid that I should *sin* against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." And when you make your self-examination, put down the neglect of intercessory prayer as sin against GOD, as well as the loss of a great opportunity and of a glorious privilege.

Sermon LXXVI.

S. BARNABAS.

(The Fourth Sunday after Trinity.)

ACTS XI. 24.

"For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

AFTER S. Peter and S. Paul, the most prominent figure in The Acts of the Apostles is S. Barnabas. For some time he was a worker with S. Paul, and he alone in that book shares with him the title of "apostle," though, like him, not one of the twelve. He is brought before us in no less than seven chapters of The Acts. We have, therefore, ample material from which to form a judgment of the character of S. Barnabas; and as he is a type which is possible for us all to imitate, there are practical reasons why we should diligently study his life.

We may begin by noticing that S. Barnabas was not a man of great intellectual power like S. Paul, nor of magnetic personality like S. Peter. He was not a great theologian, nor a great organizer, nor a great leader. He seems to have been a man of average natural gifts, not especially brilliant, but possessed of one marked characteristic which left its impress on others and enabled him to do a great work for GOD in the world; and this characteristic is clearly recognized in our text—it was the attribute of goodness. "He was a good man."

I. But were not all the saints good? How did S. Barnabas differ from S. Peter and S. Paul, for instance, in

goodness? To answer this question we must examine carefully what we mean by "goodness," and we shall see that it is not precisely the same as sanctity. S. Paul clearly distinguishes between the good man and the righteous man when he says, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die."[1] And in our ordinary speech, when we say that a man is a good man, we do not mean quite the same as when we say that he is a saint. Sanctity, indeed, does not imply a special character, as goodness does, since sanctity may belong to any kind of character, while goodness has a character of its own. In the New Testament there are only two of whom we are told that they were good men, S. Barnabas and S. Joseph of Arimathæa.[2]

Among the fruits of the Spirit as given by S. Paul, goodness comes sixth—"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness,"[3] and it is generally understood to be the active side of the preceding gift, "gentleness"; for goodness seems to be related to gentleness, as beneficence is to benevolence. Benevolence is a state of the will which is carried into action by beneficence. The benevolent man is kindly disposed; the beneficent man is a generous giver. This was, we are told, a special characteristic of Jesus Christ, in Whom every virtue was displayed; for we read that He "went about doing good."[4]

Goodness, then, is that special character of sanctity which leads its possessor to minister practically to the needs of the world in which he lives. It does not require great intellectual gifts or great administrative ability. It demands, rather, a large-hearted sympathy with our suffering fellow-men, which is the outcome of a real love of God,

[1] Rom. v. 7. [2] S. Luke xxiii. 50. [3] *Cf.* Gal. v. 22. [4] Acts x. 38.

and which manifests itself in practical efforts to relieve their necessities. In the 25th chapter of S. Matthew we find the corporal works of mercy—to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to entertain the stranger, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick and those in prison. All these are special manifestations of that goodness which was the characteristic of S. Barnabas.

II. We find the first mention of S. Barnabas in the last verses of the 4th chapter of The Acts, where a practical manifestation of his goodness is seen in a great sacrifice which he makes—"Having land, [he] sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet." [1]

The first Christian converts were very poor men. There were probably scarcely any among them who were rich. And the very fact that they had become Christians often made it difficult for them to obtain employment, at least from Jews. There was great need, therefore, of money to relieve them in their necessities, and S. Barnabas was among the first to set the example of selling his property and devoting the proceeds to this work of charity. We find that S. Paul in his missionary journeys kept this need before him, and, having no money of his own to give, solicited alms in the various Gentile Churches for the poor saints at Jerusalem.

In the 9th chapter we come across another instance of his goodness. S. Paul immediately after his conversion preached Christ at Damascus. Having to escape for his life from the city, he made his way to Jerusalem, but was regarded there with suspicion and distrust by the apostles. And when "he assayed to join himself to the disciples . . . they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple." [2] It was the kindness of S. Barnabas which

[1] Acts iv. 37. [2] Acts ix. 26.

led him to seek S. Paul, to bring him to the apostles, and to become sponsor for him.

This was another practical way in which S. Barnabas manifested his goodness by sympathy with one who was regarded with suspicion, doubtless by a willingness to hear his story, to satisfy himself of its truth, and then to take upon himself the trouble and responsibility of introducing the new convert to the apostles.

In the 11th chapter we read that the Church at Jerusalem sent forth S. Barnabas to Antioch as their representative, and it is on this occasion that we are told that "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." This was, doubtless, the reason why he was chosen as the missionary to Antioch, and also the reason why his work was so full of blessing.

Finding that he needed help in his work at Antioch, S. Barnabas departed to Tarsus to seek his old friend S. Paul, Tarsus being about eighty miles from Antioch. This was an instance of his single-hearted humility; for he doubtless recognized that in working with S. Paul he must himself take the second place. He felt, however, that S. Paul was just the man needed for the work at Antioch, and allowed no unworthy pride to hinder him from obtaining so efficient a fellow-worker, even though it involved resigning to S. Paul the prominent position he held at Antioch.

In the 13th chapter we find that, together with S. Paul, he is selected for special missionary work, and ordained to the apostolate; after which he accompanies S. Paul in his first missionary journey, recorded in the 13th and 14th chapters of The Acts.

In the 15th chapter we learn that he is sent with S. Paul as a delegate to the first œcumenical council at Jerusalem,

at which the great question of the relation of the Gentiles to the Mosaic Law was decided.

After this he separates from S. Paul on account of a dissension about taking S. Mark as their fellow-worker on the second missionary journey, S. Mark having started with them on their first journey, but having left them, and gone back after they reached Perga. At this point we lose sight of S. Barnabas; for, with the exception of a brief reference to his having been carried away by S. Peter in a certain dissimulation,[1] he is not mentioned again in Holy Writ.

S. Barnabas had his faults. They seem to have been those which came out of his natural kindliness of disposition, a tendency to yield where matters of principle were involved, as in the case of S. Peter's conduct in separating himself from the Gentiles, because he feared the opposition of certain Jews; and a want of severity in dealing with S. Mark, who, however, seems to have justified S. Barnabas' kind treatment of him; for we find S. Paul, just before his death, writing to S. Timothy, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry."[2]

We are not only told that S. Barnabas was a good man, but that he was full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." Here again we may ask, How did he differ in these points from other Christians?—since it is impossible to be a Christian without faith, and to every Christian the Holy Ghost is given.

While all Christians have the gift of faith, they possess it in different degrees, the faith of some being far greater than that of others. That he was *full* of faith implies that S. Barnabas possessed this gift in its highest degree.

[1] *Cf.* Gal. ii. 13. [2] 2 S. Tim. iv. 11.

And it was, perhaps, because he was full of faith, that he was full of the Holy Ghost; for while the same Holy Ghost is given to us all, the measure in which we possess the Holy Ghost is the measure of our own capacity. And that capacity in S. Barnabas doubtless was immensely increased by the greatness of his faith and the plenitude of his goodness. Our capacity for spiritual gifts is increased by the faithfulness with which we use our talents, as it is diminished by our slothful neglect of them; for, as Christ has said, "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." [1]

S. Barnabas, like S. Stephen, was full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, and he had as his special talent the virtue of goodness, and this he used with great diligence. So that Holy Scripture bears witness of Him that "he was a good man."

III. Just a word in regard to the practical lesson which we may learn from S. Barnabas. We cannot all be brilliant, but we can all be good; and if we are good we shall manifest our goodness in practical work for others. Like our Master, we shall go about "doing good." If any one asks, How can I do good?—the answer is, The Holy Ghost will show each, individually, the work that GOD has for him to do. If we ask, Where can I find my sphere of work?—the reply will be, GOD'S providence will show you. It may not be in some foreign country; it may be in our own town, in our own home; but if we are good, our goodness will certainly produce fruits, as it did in S. Barnabas.

To do good is to make the world better for our life, to make our fellow-men happier for having known us. And to do good in varying measures is a possibility within the reach of every one of us.

[1] S. Matt. xxv. 29.

Sermon LXXVII.

SAUL.

(The Fifth Sunday after Trinity.)

1 SAMUEL XV. 22.

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

THE meeting of two great men and the enunciation of a great religious principle are brought before us in the Old Testament lesson for to-day. The two men, Samuel and Saul, were very great in natural force and in the parts they were called to play in their country's history. One was the first of the prophets, the other the first of the kings of Israel. Both were called to their work by the direct interposition of GOD; but their deaths were a sad contrast. The one died a saint, and so long as this world shall last will be remembered as a faithful servant of GOD and a true patriot. The other died a suicide, and stands before us as a man of splendid gifts and great opportunities, who wrecked his life and ruined his country by his ungodliness. Let us turn our thoughts to the story of Saul's life. It is full of tragic interest and contains many important lessons for us all.

Saul was one of those naturally strong and gifted characters which are sure, if the opportunity offers, to develop either into a hero or a reprobate, one of those great men for whom there is no middle course.

I. How well his life began! He was chosen by GOD to be the first King of Israel, chosen because GOD saw in him just the gifts which were needed for a leader and ruler

of men. He had in him all the elements of a good and great king. He might have been glorious, but he died a cowardly suicide.

Among his natural virtues we notice modesty and humility when anointed king. He said nothing to his uncle about the splendid future which Samuel had promised him. He seems to have been free from ambition; for he went and hid himself when they sought to make him king. He showed patience and gentleness when he was despised by certain evil men, and clemency in the day of his triumph when Samuel would have caused these men to be put to death.[1] He displayed real zeal and determination and courage when he hastily raised an army, defeated the Ammonites, and delivered Jabesh-gilead. And, lastly, he seemed not wanting in religious feeling; for the Spirit of God came upon him, and he twice prophesied; and on one occasion he was scrupulous about offering a sacrifice before going forth to battle against the Philistines.[2]

II. We have not time to review the various events of his checkered career, but we may observe that the development of his character hinged on two incidents—that there were two great crises in his life, two occasions when he was weighed in the balances and found wanting.

1. The first was at Gilgal, whither he had gathered the Israelites against the overwhelming forces of the Philistines. This crisis had been foretold by Samuel when he anointed Saul, and he had been enjoined to tarry at Gilgal seven days till Samuel should come to offer sacrifices and to show Saul what he was to do.[3]

We find that he tarried seven days, but that Samuel came not to Gilgal, and the people began to desert Saul; and so Saul determined to wait no longer, but to offer the

[1] *Cf.* 1 Sam. x. 27; and xi. 12, 13. [2] *Cf.* 1 Sam. xiii. 9. [3] *Cf.* 1 Sam. x. 8.

burnt offering and peace offering himself. He offered the burnt offering; but before he could offer the peace offering Samuel came, that is, before the close of the seventh day. Saul excused himself to Samuel, saying that the people were leaving him, the Philistines threatening him; so that he forced himself and offered a burnt offering. But Samuel rebuked him, saying, "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which He commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue."[1]

The sin of Saul was in thinking that a religious act was of more consequence than a religious principle, that to offer a sacrifice, even though irregularly, was of more importance than to obey a distinct commandment of God. In this Saul manifests his true religious character, and we see that with him religion is little better than a fetish, that it consisted only in the performance of external rites, that it did not restrain him from irreverence in intruding himself into the priestly office, though a layman, and did not keep him from disobeying God's distinct commands. He had been told to wait until Samuel came to offer the sacrifice and to tell him what to do. He pleads, as an excuse, the exigencies of the situation, that the people were deserting, and that he must act at once. He waited *almost* seven days, and then shows his want of faith in God and his lack of obedience to His commands.

We find, however, that while he ignored God's command and did not fear to intrude himself into the priest's office, he manifested his religious self-will also by a rash oath, saying, "Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies."[2]

[1] *Cf.* 1 Sam. xiii. 11-14. [2] 1 Sam. xiv. 24.

This rash and unnecessary oath caused the people to commit a great sin, eating animals with the blood, and so breaking the Mosaic Law, and brought upon Saul a great mortification; for when Jonathan unwittingly ignored his father's injunction and ate some honey, and Saul was about to have him put to death for it, he was delivered by the people, to the great mortification of the king. GOD, however, gave victory to Israel; but the honour of the victory was Jonathan's, not Saul's.

2. The second great crisis in Saul's life was the command of GOD brought him by Samuel, to destroy the Amalekites. The injunction was explicit—he was utterly to destroy all that the Amalekites had, to slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. By GOD'S help, Saul obtained an easy victory over the Amalekites; but he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and "spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly."

Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said unto him, "Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord." This was an untruth; for GOD had commanded him to destroy utterly the Amalekites and all their possessions; whereas he had saved all the best, and only destroyed what was vile and refuse and worthless.

Samuel asks him, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Saul makes the excuse, "The people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy GOD; and the rest we have utterly destroyed." Saul makes the excuse that, though he had broken GOD'S

commandment, it was in order that he might honour God by offering what he had saved in sacrifice. Probably the excuse was false; for he had certainly not saved Agag alive to offer him in sacrifice; and very likely the best of the cattle were intended for his own use.

Samuel sternly rebukes him and enunciates the great religious principle summed up in our text, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

We may observe that in his excuse Saul tried to shift the responsibility on to the people, saying, "*I* have obeyed the voice of the Lord . . . but the *people* took of the spoil . . . to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal."

Saul's second great failure may be traced to the same cause as the first—substituting an external religious rite for obedience to a command of God. The external rite cost so little, the obedience involved so much; for obedience involved the real sacrifice, the giving up of the spoils of Amalek. The mere rite of sacrifice cost so little, offering to God a part of the spoils instead of destroying them all utterly.

Samuel tells Saul plainly of his sin, and pronounces judgment upon it—"Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king." Immediately Saul replies, "I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord." This Samuel refuses. Whereupon Saul says, "I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my

people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God."

Observe in these words of Saul the religious insincerity of his character. Even when he says that he repents, he tries to put the blame upon the people. And when Samuel exposes to him the hypocrisy of his penitence he pleads only that Samuel will honour him before the people, not that Samuel will help him to repent and to make his peace with God.

III. We must pass very briefly over the remainder of Saul's life. He became moody and revengeful; hated David, who he knew was to succeed him in the kingdom, and strove to kill him. And yet God gave him many opportunities of repentance. Twice when David spared his life Saul's better nature asserted itself for a little while. Both these were opportunities of penitence sent him from God. But they were rejected. At last the end comes. Saul prepares for his final battle.[1] He sees the enemy arrayed against him, and he is afraid, his heart trembles —he who had been so courageous in the beginning of his reign. He inquires of God; but God answers him not. He has rejected God, and God has forsaken him. So he turns, as wicked men often do in their despair, to superstition. He seeks out a witch of En-dor, and through her strives to have communication with Samuel. Through Samuel, God sends him one more call—"to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me." His death is so near, and yet there is time for repentance; not that he can change his punishment, but that he can change his relation to God and make his peace with God. But no; he goes to the battle of Gilboa. His own courage revives for awhile, but God has left him; and overcome and wounded

[1] *Cf.* 1 Sam. xxviii.

by the enemy, he seals a life of degeneracy by an act of cowardice, and commits suicide.

IV. The lessons we may draw from the story of Saul are chiefly two:

1. That great gifts and great opportunities may lead to failure and shipwreck unless we seek GOD'S grace. Few began their life with brighter promise, few had greater natural powers than Saul. Yet how disastrous was the end, not only for Saul himself, but for the country he ruled.

2. The other and the more important lesson is contained in the principle, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." No external religion can make up for the want of a spirit of true devotion to GOD'S Will. GOD does not delight so much in what we do as in what we are. Splendid ritual, frequent services, costly gifts, will not make up for a heart which is estranged from GOD.

Many begin, like Saul, with great gifts of nature and grace; but when the crisis in their life comes, they fail to trust GOD, fail to ask of GOD, What wilt *Thou* have me to do?—fail to wait for GOD. They get impatient and act on natural impulse, and gradually degenerate, until at last they give up GOD altogether, though perhaps still preserving the outward forms of religion. No religious principle can be more valuable than that taught us in the lesson to-day, "To obey is better than sacrifice."

Sermon LXXVIII.

TRIBULATION THE ENTRANCE TO HEAVEN.

(The Fifth Sunday after Trinity.)

ACTS XIV. 22.

"Exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of GOD."

THE chapter from which these words are taken gives us a very good idea of what S. Paul meant when he told his converts that it was through many tribulations that they must enter heaven. Incidentally, it also shows us what was involved in becoming a Christian in those days.

At this point in The Acts we have an account of S. Paul's first missionary journey, which we may justly term the first mission to the heathen. Up to this time the Gospel had been preached primarily to the Jews, and only to those Gentiles who, like Cornelius, were associated with Judaism as proselytes of the gate, or who lived in cities like Antioch, where there was a large Jewish colony.

I. The success which attended the preaching of S. Paul and S. Barnabas in the great Gentile city of Antioch emboldened the Church at that place to send them forth to a wider sphere of work. So they went through Cyprus, Pamphylia, Pisidia and Lycaonia, visiting the chief cities and preaching the Gospel, first in the synagogues of the Jews, and afterwards to the Gentiles. They met with various fortunes, as their teaching aroused curiosity, admiration, opposition, or bitter persecution.

To take but one example, which we find in the chapter

from which our text is taken—After spending some time in evangelical work at Iconium, they were driven thence and had to flee to Lystra, where S. Paul performed the miracle of healing a man who had been crippled from his birth. This aroused such astonishment and admiration that the Gentile inhabitants of the city supposed that they were gods, and were about to accord them divine honours, when S. Paul stopped them. Shortly afterwards, however, some Jews from Antioch and Iconium so worked upon the people that they produced a revulsion of feeling towards S. Paul, and the people, "having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead."

This is probably a fair type of what the first missionaries of Christianity had to endure; for S. Paul in another place describes his experiences as follows: "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft; of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one, thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." [1]

In inviting his hearers to accept the claims of Christ, S. Paul knew that he was inviting them in the most literal sense to take up the cross and to follow Christ. For although their trials doubtless were far less than his, since they were less prominent and aggressive than he was, yet to embrace Christianity meant to face dangers, persecu-

[1] 2 Cor. xi. 23-28.

tion, and perhaps death. And S. Paul was far too honest to deceive them in regard to the difficulties they would have to meet if they cast in their lot with him. Indeed, it was after he had been stoned and left for dead at Lystra, that he returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God." They knew, therefore, what he meant by "tribulation"—that it was not a mere poetical synonym for the ordinary trials of every-day life, that it was not a mere cant word of religious phraseology—but that it meant taking up the Cross of Christ in stern reality.

The result of such teaching and of the example of S. Paul's own experience must have been to keep out of the Christian Church all who were not thoroughly in earnest. Or if any had accepted the yoke of Christ before they realized what it involved, such probably quickly withdrew when they saw the sufferings of S. Paul and heard his exhortation that they "must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God."

Tribulation, then, was the touch-stone by which Christians were tested. It acted as a means of separating the earnest from the lukewarm, the true from the false. And tribulation has been having this same effect in the Christian Church from S. Paul's day to our own, as the history of the word itself implies.

II. The word "tribulation" in its present sense was coined by an early Latin writer of the Church. That is to say, it comes to us through ecclesiastical Latin. The word from which it is derived, "tribulum," or "tribula," signified the threshing harrow of the Roman farmer, which seems to have been a sort of wooden sledge studded with iron teeth, or apparently in some instances of stone, which

was dragged over the wheat, in order, by bruising it, to separate the grain from the chaff.

Tertullian, one of the earliest Latin writers of the Church, who lived in Africa, where we are told this sort of threshing harrow was especially used, seems to have been the first to use the word "tribulatio," to represent those trials, afflictions and difficulties which in Christians separate the grain from the chaff. And we afterwards find the word used by S. Augustine and S. Jerome in the same sense.

It is, perhaps, worth observing that the Greek word from which the Latin "tribulare" is derived (θλίβειν) is the very word used in this passage, and in its original meaning it signifies "to press, to gall," and hence "to afflict, to distress."

The history of the word, therefore, enables us to understand why "we must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of GOD." Nothing imperfect can enter heaven. Hence, one of the purposes of this life is to perfect and develop character, and to test and discriminate between real virtues and their counterfeits—to separate the grain from the chaff.

Certainly nothing effects this like tribulation. It develops character. And, as we have observed, it tests a Christian, proving whether he is sincerely a follower of Christ, or merely one who nominally professes Christianity. Tribulation in the sincere Christian is always accompanied by grace sufficient to enable him to bear the tribulation. Therefore S. Paul assures us that "GOD is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." [1]

[1] 1 Cor. x. 13.

"Temptation" in this passage merely signifies "trial." God promises that He will not suffer us to be tried beyond our strength, and that with each trial He will make a way of escape that we may be able to bear it; that is, that He will send us grace so to bear it that it may not crush us.

III. We must bear in mind that S. Paul's words are as true to-day as when he uttered them—that we "must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God." The tribulations are different, but their effect is the same. We have not now to fear personal violence, or danger to life or goods, because we follow the teachings of Christ. But this does not mean that we are to be any more free from tribulations than the Christians of S. Paul's day, or that tribulation is any less necessary as the principal factor in developing spiritual character, in sanctifying the soul, and in separating those who are Christ's in deed from those who are only Christ's in name.

But tribulation in its various forms—sorrow, pain, poverty, humiliation—is not the exclusive experience of the Christian; it belongs to all men in this world; for "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."[1] What is peculiar to the Christian is that tribulation is accompanied by a special grace which enables him to bear it, so that it may sanctify his character, and that it becomes, as it were, the raw material of his future glory in heaven. For S. Paul assures us that "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."[2]

We may observe that the effect of tribulation is twofold

[1] Job v. 7. [2] 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

in this world. Some are hardened, embittered, and soured, by trouble, distress, and sorrow; while with others the same experience has only the effect of developing their character, of deepening their sympathy with others who are suffering, of sanctifying their whole nature.

This latter effect of tribulation is sometimes found in those who are not believers in Christ; but this does not make it any the less a Christian virtue. For there are also those who do not believe in Christ, who yet accept and try to live by the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount; but this fact does not render that teaching any the less the teaching of Christ.

What is tribulation working in us? Is it sanctifying our character? Is it making us more gentle, more patient, more Christ-like? Or are we becoming, under its pressure, irritable, bitter, hard? Tribulation will have one of these two effects in each one of us. Which it will be must be determined largely by whether we are bearing our tribulations in reliance upon God's grace, or in our own strength; whether we are realizing that tribulations are blessings sent us by God, to help us to enter His kingdom, or whether we regard them merely as misfortunes, for which we blame God, or the world, or any one, except ourselves.

There are two passages in which the word "tribulation" occurs, which I would commend to your most earnest consideration, not only for the present time but throughout your life. One is the passage we have been considering this morning—"We must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God." The other is the words of the elder to S. John, who, when he saw the glories of heaven, was asked by one of the elders, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" And the elder went on to say, "These are they which came

out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God." [1]

Two things only seem to be necessary to secure our entrance to heaven—tribulation and penitence. The elder pointed out that these were the two characteristics of the white-robed multitude in heaven—that they had been through great tribulation, and that they had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. So that when S. Paul lays down as a necessary condition of entering the kingdom of God, that we must pass through many tribulations, he is only enunciating a necessary doctrine of Christianity. For the elder in heaven assures S. John that all saints whom he saw there had been through great tribulation, that is, had fulfilled S. Paul's condition before they entered heaven.

Sermon LXXIX.

FRIENDSHIP.

(The Sixth Sunday after Trinity.)

2 Samuel i. 26.

"I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

AMONG the many classical stories of beautiful friendships which adorn the pages of the world's literature, none perhaps is more exquisite than the story of the friendship of Jonathan and David. To its power David bears pathetic witness in his

[1] Rev. vii. 13-15.

generous and touching elegy on the death of his bitterest enemy Saul, and of his dearest friend Jonathan, when he says, "Very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

I. That the friendship of Jonathan and David was most beautiful, all will at once admit. But in what way was it *wonderful,* that is, in what way did it differ from other warm and passionate friendships?

It was wonderful, because it was founded upon a love untainted by selfishness and cemented by adversity. In most friendships the opposite is the case; there is much that is selfish. We love our friend, because he ministers to our pleasure or self-interest. But in the friendship of Jonathan, as we shall presently see, neither selfishness nor self-interest had any place.

But not only was this friendship untainted by selfishness, it was cemented by adversity. Adversity tries our friends. And it is a common experience of the world that the majority of those who profess friendship for us desert us when we are in adversity. It was not so with Jonathan. When David was hunted by his father from place to place, Jonathan's friendship for him never wavered, it remained unalterable.

The beginning of this friendship was not gradual, but spontaneous, and seems to have been the direct outcome of David's victory over Goliath; for it was on this occasion that we read, "that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. . . . Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul." [1]

At first, probably, there was aroused in Jonathan admiration of an act of splendid courage and faith. Then the

[1] 1 Sam. xviii. 1, 3.

fact that the two young men were of about the same age and had the same ruling passion—religious patriotism—naturally drew them together. Not only were David and Jonathan about the same age, but they were of the age most favourable to devoted and passionate friendships. They possessed, moreover, the same virtue—magnificent courage. They were of the same deeply religious temperament and had the same great object in life—the deliverance of their country from its oppressors. All these were, doubtless, elements in binding them together in the wonderful love, in the unbroken friendship, of which David speaks in our text.

This friendship was wonderful in its unselfishness; for from a worldly standpoint they were rivals, and Jonathan knew that he was to give place to David, that David was to supplant him upon the throne. And yet, in spite of this, Jonathan loved him for what he was. Surely, this was a great tribute to David's attractive personality.

It requires no small charity to restrain all dislike to a rival, especially when that rival is not only successful, but deprives us of our own birthright. Jonathan was Saul's rightful heir; and yet, knowing that David was to supplant him, he not only restrained any feelings of dislike, but loved him, truly, passionately, and to the very end. It is difficult to decide which most to admire—the unselfishness of Jonathan, or the attractiveness of David's character, which could win such a love in spite of adverse circumstances.

Then again, it was a friendship that was maintained notwithstanding most serious hindrances—long periods of separation and the persecution of Saul. Jonathan and David could have seen but little of each other in the latter

years, but this does not seem to have diminished their sincere love for one another.

Lastly, this friendship brought only suffering on Jonathan; for it brought upon him the displeasure of his father, expressed not only in bitter words, but in an attempt upon his life when Saul cast a javelin at him.[1]

Jonathan's position was indeed a difficult one—to be loyal to his father, and yet to be true to his friend. And it is another instance of Jonathan's goodness, that to the end he preserved his loyalty to his father, thoroughly as he disagreed with him; and yet he never wavered in the love and friendship which he had given to David.

II. What a wonderful power a true friendship is? One of the most precious and beautiful of all GOD'S gifts in this world is a true friend. In how many ways is friendship helpful to us in our pilgrimage through this vale of tears!

1. And first, in sympathy. In bearing our many burdens in life, what help is so great as the sympathy of a friend, stimulating our flagging energies, sharing our deepest sorrows, encouraging us to meet and to overcome the difficulties and obstacles of our work? And yet sympathy has its dangers; on the one hand, that we may rely too much upon the sympathy of a friend, instead of seeking the sympathy of Christ, the help of His grace; and, on the other hand, that a friend may sometimes sympathize with us in what is wrong, either through foolish affection for us, or from a cowardly fear of telling us the truth.

2. Then in sorrow, there is the consolation of friendship. In the hour of bereavement, when life seems dark, and our heart is bleeding from the wound which it has received, how great is the comfort of the friend who says but little,

[1] *Cf.* 1 Sam. xx. 28-35.

but shows by the pressure of the hand, by the tone of the voice, by the look of the eye, that he realizes the greatness of our sorrow, and suffers with us.

3. Again, in the many difficulties of life we need counsel and advice; and from whom do we seek this so readily as from a friend? Probably, scarcely anything is so great a test of true friendship as the counsel which is given. Some endeavour merely to discover what their friend wishes to do, and then to find reasons why he should do it. True friendship, however, should lead us sometimes to give unpalatable advice, to give counsel which is severe but salutary. How great a help in difficulty is such a friend!

4. Then, when we are thoroughly discouraged by the failure of our efforts, by the difficulties in our path, when life seems scarcely worth living, and the work to which we have given our best years shows so little promise that we are tempted to give it all up, what an opportunity there is for a word of encouragement from a friend who appreciates our efforts, who knows our trials, and who, by his encouragement, sets us on our feet again, with new life, and hope, and strength.

5. And lastly, and by no means the least, is the stimulating power of friendship. There have been, probably, few great thinkers whose ideas have not been stimulated by a congenial friend with whom they have discussed the great thoughts surging in their minds, whose interest and appreciative sympathy has not whetted their intellects and helped to give form and accuracy to the great conceptions which they have gradually evolved. Many, probably, know by experience the power a friend has to draw the best out of us, not only to stimulate us to effort, but to

aid us to express clearly what is floating somewhat vaguely in our mind.

The possibilities of friendship are indeed many and great, especially in the case of young men who, like Jonathan and David, have the same noble ambition as the ruling passion of their lives. In all great movements, whether religious or political, their source may generally be traced to the united action of a noble friendship. How many such have begun in the friendships of university life!

The wonderful religious movement which has done so much for England in our own generation is often spoken of as "The Oxford Movement," not only because of the prominent part in it played by members of that University, but because its source can be traced back to a small body of young men drawn together in friendship by the cords of a common and noble ambition—the ambition to free the Church of England from her bondage, and to make her once more a living power for the nation's good. The names of Keble, Pusey, and Newman not only suggest the leaders in that movement, but men drawn together in the closest intimacy of a friendship founded upon all that was best and most unselfish, working for a common end, and that end the glory of GOD and the good of the Church of England.

We must not, however, forget that it is the noblest things which are sometimes capable of the worst perversion, and that if friendship is an immense force for good, it is also a terrible power for evil in this world. How many a man and woman can trace the habit of sin which has ruined their life and robbed them of happiness, to an evil friendship! How often Satan, who can disguise himself as an angel of light, approaches us through the instrumentality of a friend! A bad friendship—what can be worse?—a

friendship in which each seeks only self-gratification, in which one poisons the other's life by introducing into it a knowledge of sin, which, but for that friend, might never have been acquired; which, if offered by any one else, would at once have been rejected, resisted, conquered!

Friendship is a great privilege, but a solemn responsibility. Let us ponder over the classic friendship of the Bible—the friendship of Jonathan and David, so unselfish, so stedfast in adversity—and let us strive to frame our friendships on this pattern.

Sermon LXXX.

THE HOLY GHOST IN THE CHURCH.

(The Sixth Sunday after Trinity.)

ACTS XV. 28.

"For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us."

SPECIAL interest attaches to this chapter of the Acts, as containing the record of the first great council of the Church. A serious question, at once practical and doctrinal, had arisen in connection with the admission of Gentiles into the Church. S. Peter and S. Paul had each, on their own authority, taken the initiative, and had admitted Gentiles without requiring that they should be circumcised or that they should conform to the Mosaic Law. To some, however, of the Jewish Christians such action seemed unjustifiable, and at Antioch—at that time the principal Gentile centre—the question was hotly discussed, and there seemed no other

way of settling it than by an appeal to the apostles at Jerusalem.

S. Paul and S. Barnabas, together with others from Antioch, were sent as delegates to the council at Jerusalem, where "they were received of the Church, and of the apostles and elders." We are informed very distinctly that the council was composed of two orders—apostles and elders; for this is mentioned twice.[1] Others were present, but they seemed to have taken no part in the discussion, and certainly none in the decision which was reached. There was much disputing on both sides; that is to say, both sides had an opportunity of presenting their case. The principal speakers were four, S. Peter and S. James, S. Barnabas and S. Paul. S. Peter gave his experience in the case of the admission of the first Gentile, the centurion Cornelius. S. Paul and S. Barnabas told of their missionary success among the Gentiles. S. James, probably the Bishop of Jerusalem, spoke last, and, apparently as president of the council, summed up what had been said, and formulated the decision of the council. This decision was afterwards reduced to writing and sent by delegates to the Churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia.

I. The point, however, to which I desire to draw your attention to-day is the wording of the decision, which shows the authority claimed by the council. They wrote, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us." There is no hesitation, no doubt, in their minds, but that their decision is the decision of the Holy Ghost, because their decision was the decision of the Church. For the council at Jerusalem represented the Church, in that it was composed of the apostles and elders who came together, and the delegates from the Church at Antioch.

[1] Acts xv. 4, 6.

The Holy Ghost in the Church.

Our Lord had said to the apostles, in teaching them about the Holy Ghost, "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."[1] He had also said to S. Peter concerning the Church, that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."[2] And relying upon these promises of our Lord, the apostles, assembled together with the elders representing the Church, do not hesitate to claim the authority of the Holy Ghost for their action.

Writing nearly half a century later, not to an individual Church, but to the Church at large in a general epistle, S. John says, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. . . . Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father."[3]

You will observe that S. John affirms that the Church has received an unction of the Holy Ghost which enables it to know all things. This statement is precisely in accord with our Lord's promise, "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."

S. John then goes on to point out that, because the Church possesses a heavenly Guide, it does not need an earthly teacher; for he says, a few verses further on, "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any *man* teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him."[4]

[1] S. John xvi. 13. [2] S. Matt. xvi. 18. [3] 1 S. John ii. 20-24. [4] ii. 27.

II. From our Lord's promises, from S. John's assertion, and from the action of the council at Jerusalem, we may gather with absolute certainty that the apostles believed that the Church possessed a living Voice, the Voice of the Holy Ghost, speaking through a properly constituted council in regard to questions of faith and practice which required settlement.

This living Voice of the Church, however, was not confined to the council of Jerusalem. It speaks as truly and as authoritatively in every œcumenical council of the Church, and by its guidance the great Creed of the Church was drawn up at the councils of Nicæa and Chalcedon; the questions in regard to the person and nature of our Lord Jesus Christ were finally settled in the councils of Nicæa, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon; and the hypostatic union of the two natures, human and divine, in the one Person of God the Word was in those councils authoritatively defined.

While this Voice of the Holy Ghost speaks with absolute certainty through an œcumenical council, it also guides the Church in her ordinary teachings, though for these the same authority cannot be claimed as for the definition of the general council. Hence, tradition, in its true sense, is in the Church the work of the Holy Ghost.

It may be well in passing to point out that, since it is not possible that every part of the Church should actually be present in any one council, it is sufficient, to give to a council œcumenical authority, that no part of the Church should be excluded from it, and that its decisions should afterwards be ratified by the whole Church, that is, by those who are not present at the council. Hence, the number of bishops present does not determine whether a council is œcumenical or not, but the fact that all had the

opportunity of being present, and that the decision at which the council arrived was afterwards ratified or accepted by the rest of the Church.

There have been but few œcumenical councils, at most only seven. So that we cannot confine the dogmas of the Church to the small number of doctrines which were treated of at these councils. Where we find that *every part* of the Church teaches a doctrine, we may surely accept that as true, even though it has not yet received the recognition of an œcumenical council.

III. Again, we may point out that, while truth cannot change, this does not mean that there can be no growth or development of truth to meet the needs of differing ages. There are two kinds of change in the world—the change of decay and the change of growth. The one destroys, the other perfects. Let us take as examples two of the principal doctrines of our Faith—the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is explicitly contained in the baptismal formula. Yet we may trace its growth into the baptismal or apostolic Creed, then to the clearer definitions of the Creeds of Nicæa and Chalcedon; and finally to its full statement in that which goes by the name of S. Athanasius. Here we see growth into perfect expression, but absolute identity is preserved. There is nothing in the Creed of S. Athanasius which conflicts in the slightest degree with the baptismal formula, nothing which is not implicitly contained in it. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity simply has been more clearly defined to meet heresies in the Church, but it is always one and the same doctrine.

If we trace the history of this dogma outside the Church we shall see, not the change of legitimate growth, but of corruption and decay. We may trace it through the

heresies of Sabellius and Socinus to the blank Deism of the Unitarians of our own day; but the doctrine is not the same. No one can say that the baptismal formula from which we start in Holy Scripture can be reconciled with Sabellianism, or with Unitarianism, either in its Socinian or theistic forms.

Again, let us take the doctrine of the Incarnation. It is most briefly expressed by S. John—"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."[1] Through the definitions of the councils of Nicæa, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, we reach the full definition of the two natures under one Person. We see the growth and perfection of statement in the doctrine, but no change whatever.

On the other hand, outside the Church every sort of corruption and change is introduced into this doctrine, from the Kenotism of Beron to the full denial of our Lord's Divinity by German Rationalists of our own time.

He Who guides the growth and perfects the development of Christian doctrine, while preserving its identity, is the Holy Ghost. We may illustrate this from the analogy of God's action in the material world. In the plenitude of His Omnipotence He created the material world. By the continuous action of the same Omnipotence He preserves all things in existence, and guides each in its proper growth and development. In a similar manner the deposit of truth or revelation given to the Church on the Day of Pentecost by the operation of the Holy Ghost, is preserved in perpetuity and guided in its development by the same Holy Ghost working in the Church. This it is which gives to the Church her authority in matters of faith and morals. This it is which constitutes the differ-

[1] S. John i. 14.

ence between her utterances and the mere opinions of individual men or individual congregations, however earnest or however learned they may be.

The Church when she defines "Truth" says, in the words of the apostles, "It seems good to the Holy Ghost, and to us." Those who recognize the Church's authority accept her utterances as the teachings of that Spirit of Truth, Who, according to Christ's promise, shall ever lead the Church into all truth.

Sermon LXXXI.

THE THRESHING-FLOOR OF ARAUNAH.

(The Seventh Sunday after Trinity.)

1 CHRONICLES XXI. 26.

"And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the Lord; and He answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering."

THE episode of David's sacrifice at the threshing-floor of Araunah has a special interest as determining the spot where for one thousand years the Temple of GOD stood, and the sacrificial worship instituted by GOD Himself prepared the way for the one Sacrifice by which man was redeemed, and for the Eucharistic worship of the Christian Church.

The events which led up to the sacrifice at the threshing-floor of Araunah are all narrated in the first lesson of this morning's service, and are also found, with some slight differences, in the Book of Samuel[1]—David's sin in num-

[1] *Cf.* 2 Sam. xxiv.

bering the people, David's penitence, the punishment which followed, the three days' pestilence, David's prayer of self-devotion, "Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? Let Thine hand, I pray Thee, O Lord my GOD, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on Thy people, that they should be plagued."

Then too we find there GOD'S answer by the mouth of Gad, "That David should go up, and set up an altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite"; and then the particulars of the first sacrifice offered there, the first of innumerable sacrifices offered on that spot for more than a thousand years.

I. But who was Araunah, and where was his threshing-floor?

Araunah was a Canaanite, one of the ancient people of the land. This we may gather, not only from the fact that we are told he was a Jebusite, but from the many forms in which his name is spelled. In the Book of Samuel it is "Araunah," but spelled in no less than four different ways; while in the two places in which it occurs in the Book of Chronicles it is "Ornan."

From the words in the account in Samuel, "All these things did Araunah, *as a king*, give unto the king,"[1] it has been thought by some that Araunah, though now living under the dominion of David, was the former king, or chieftain, of the Jebusites, who had held the citadel of Jerusalem, the stronghold of Zion, until it was captured by David.[2]

The place was one of the most hallowed spots in the Holy Land—nay, in the world—for there Abraham at

[1] 2 Sam. xxiv. 23. [2] *Cf.* 2 Sam. v. 7.

God's bidding had offered up in sacrifice his son Isaac. There, too, the mysterious priest-king Melchizedek had ministered. And it was upon this spot that God commanded the destroying angel to sheathe his sword; there David offered his sacrifice; there the fire descended from heaven to consume the sacrifice in token of God's acceptance of it; and there the temple was built and the worship of God celebrated, until Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and the Christian Altars everywhere took the place of the one Altar of God in the temple at Jerusalem.

II. But let us study a little more closely the details of David's sacrifice. In answer to his prayer Gad is sent to David to tell him to "set up an altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite." Araunah and his four sons had seen the angel, and so quite understand David's purpose in desiring to build an altar there.

And when David said, "Grant me the place of this threshing-floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the Lord: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people," Araunah at once offered to give him not only the threshing-floor, but the oxen for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the meat offering. David, however, declined the gift, saying, "Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost."

In these words David enunciates an important religious principle—that we must not offer to God of that which costs us nothing. There is a worldly maxim, that things are generally worth what they cost. It is certainly true in religion. Whether it be our prayers, or our penitence, or our sacrifices, they are generally worth in God's sight, and to our own soul, what they cost. The prayer which

has cost a great struggle, with weariness, or with wandering thoughts, or with rebellious feelings, is worth far more than the prayer which costs us nothing. The penitence, which has cost an agony of shame, and humiliation and bitter pain, is of incomparably greater value than the penitence which is the mere utterance of a few formal words of confession of sin. And so the sacrifices, the offerings, which we bring to God, are to be estimated by what they cost us.

Indeed, the very word "sacrifice" has come in our common speech to have this significance. To make a great sacrifice is to do something, or to give something, which costs us much. It was not the original significance of the word, nor indeed the earliest conception of sacrifice. But the idea which is associated with it now is a true one, that what we offer to God must cost us much, if it is to be a worthy expression of our love, of our devotion, and of our penitence.

III. At this time the tabernacle and the altar of burnt offering were in the high place at Gibeon. But David was afraid to go there, and continued to sacrifice at Araunah's threshing-floor; and later he built a tabernacle there, and placed in it the Ark of God which he had brought from the house of Obed-edom; and then towards the close of his life prepared material for his son Solomon to build there the great Temple of God.

We may ask, What led David to continue to sacrifice at this place and to choose it for the Temple?—Apparently two things: (1) It was the place where God had answered his prayer. (2) It was associated with his penitence, his humiliation and his pardon.

1. That his prayer was answered, David understood from two signs which were vouchsafed him—the fire

descending from heaven and consuming the sacrifice, and the angel whom he seems to have seen sheathing his sword at God's command.

2. Many would suppose that the place would have such painful memories for David in connection with his sin, and penitence, and punishment, that it would be the last place he would choose for the purpose of the worship of God.

The world recognizes sin as a misfortune, as a disease, but ignores its guilt. The world's remedy for sin is the sacrament of oblivion, not the Sacrament of Penance. The world would say, Forget your mistakes; to remember them is always a sign that you are morbid. The saint, like David, on the other hand, perseveres in penitence, praying, "Wash me more and more from my sin."[1] Being what he is, through God's mercy cleansed from sin, he does not fear to remember what he was by his own act —a sinner. The remembrance of his sin is also the recollection of God's great mercy, and therefore is like fuel to his love—to recall the great things that God has done for him only makes it burn up brighter.

David even loves to dwell upon his punishment; for he recognizes its salutary effect upon his character, like the writer of the great psalm of the saints, who says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word"; and again, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes."[2]

Penance, humbly accepted and bravely endured, brings many blessings in its train, and the true penitent will have no desire to forget either his sin or its punishment; for

[1] "Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea." Psalm li. 2 (Vulgate).

[2] Psalm cxix. 67, 71.

the remembrance of them will only recall the goodness and the love of GOD.

It was on this spot that for a thousand years the worship of GOD went on in the Temple. How many penitents there found peace; how many in trouble and sorrow, comfort; how many in perplexity, guidance!

What a prominent place the Temple occupies in our Old Testament studies, and indeed in the life of our Lord! And yet, how few think of the circumstances which led to the choice of its site—a great sin and a great penitence —and the lesson this teaches—a striking instance of the way GOD often brings great good out of evil.

Sermon LXXXII.

THE BERŒANS AND THE ATHENIANS.

(The Seventh Sunday after Trinity.)

ACTS XVII. 11.

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

IT is a suggestive coincidence, if nothing more, that in this chapter of *the Acts of the Apostles* we have brought into striking contrast two typical attitudes of mind in relation to truth.

In the narrative of S. Paul's missionary work we are told that his preaching of the Gospel at Berœa and at Athens met with the most opposite reception; and this is distinctly traced to the difference of character in the Berœans and Athenians. Of the former we read that they

"were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Of the latter we are told that they "spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing."[1]

It will be not only interesting but instructive if we examine the attitude of mind in these two peoples, as illustrating certain types of character with which the religion of Christ comes in contact in every age.

I. The Berœans are described as "more noble," and the word (εὐγενέστεροι) really refers to "nobility of birth." It is found only three times in the New Testament—in this passage; again in S. Luke, where our Lord says, "A certain *nobleman* went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom";[2] and by S. Paul, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many *noble,* are called."[3]

Berœa was an ancient and prosperous city; but S. Luke shows that in applying the epithet "noble" to its inhabitants he is thinking not so much of nobility of birth, as of nobility of character; and indeed the truest nobility is, of course, that of mind and soul.

In the case of the Berœans this nobility of character manifested itself by a mind open to the reception of truth. They did not allow prejudice to hinder them from investigating truth. They were equally removed from weak credulity and from obstinate prejudice, the two great hindrances to the progress of truth.

For we must remember that weak credulity is really as inimical to truth as prejudice. Those persons who are always ready to believe whatever they are told are not

[1] Acts xvii. 21. [2] S. Luke xix. 12. [3] 1 Cor. i. 26.

only likely to believe many things which are not true, but when they have received the truth they are in danger of allowing it to be displaced in their minds by something which is not true, but which happens to be the last thing which they have heard. On the other hand, obstinate prejudice is a barrier, often insurmountable, to any reception of truth whatever.

The Berœans of whom S. Paul was speaking were Jews, and his preaching of a crucified Messiah must have been extremely obnoxious to their prejudices; and yet they were ready to investigate S. Paul's teachings; and the test which they took was the Word of God, those Old Testament Scriptures, which, as our Lord Himself said,[1] bore witness of Him. They were not satisfied with a mere superficial investigation of the matter; "they . . . searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." On the one hand, they were not ready to accept S. Paul's statements without adequate authority; but on the other, they did not reject them with unreasoning prejudice.

From the Berœans, then, we learn the duty of individual research into truth. While we may first receive truth on the authority of the Church, and indeed must do so; yet if we are to make that truth our own, we ought to search the Scriptures to find from them not only arguments in support of it, but passages which throw light upon it, and enable us to understand better what the Church has taught us.

II. In striking contrast to the Berœans we have the men of Athens. They prided themselves on their education and artistic taste—and with justice; for in the literature and art of its golden age, Athens has never been surpassed. They had every educational advantage; and

[1] *Cf.* S. John v. 39.

yet we find the result was most disappointing—great intellectual activity, perhaps, but an entire absence of intellectual seriousness.

In his short description of S. Paul's intercourse with the Athenians, S. Luke brings before us no less than five different classes of mind more or less prevalent among the Athenians.

1. Some manifested contemptuous condescension; for they asked, "What will this babbler say?"[1] These seem to have been philosophers of the Epicurean and Stoic schools. Pride was the great hindrance which truth had to meet with in their case. Because they were philosophers by profession, they thought that they knew everything, and listened to S. Paul with contemptuous condescension. But "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."[2] They were, therefore, not benefitted by the preaching of the Gospel.

2. Others listened to S. Paul from idle curiosity, and these seem to have been the majority; for we are told that "all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing";[3] literally, "some *newer* thing" (καινότερον), "the very last news."

This habit grows upon a people, and comes to be a disease. It is epidemic in our own day—restless curiosity, always wanting something new. We see it in spoiled children with their toys. We see it in women with their fashions, in men with their fads; and even in apparently religious people who seek for some new sensation—it may be in a new revivalist, or it may be in a new heresy. Idle curiosity will not lead us to truth; it is a disease,

[1] Acts xvii. 18. [2] 1 S. Peter v. 5. [3] Acts xvii. 21.

which kills all true nobility of mind, and must be sternly repressed if we really desire to know the truth.

3. There were yet others who received S. Paul's teaching with scoffs and jeers; for "when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked."[1] This habit of mind is by no means unknown in our age. There are some who scoff at the supernatural now, who ridicule whatever is contrary to their own opinions, and who set up their puny minds in opposition to God's revelation. The mind of the scoffer is fenced around with an impenetrable barrier against truth; he will not investigate, he scarcely listens; he meets what he does not believe with ridicule.

4. Fourthly, there is a class, present among the Athenians, who opposed to S. Paul's teaching the weapon of procrastination. These are the best of the classes which we have thus far met with. They are more or less convinced intellectually by what they have heard, but they do not wish to act upon it. They are not willing to take any decisive step, and so they say, as some of the Athenians did to S. Paul, "We will hear thee again of this matter."[2]

How sad is the state of these men! They are almost won to Christ. The truth has made its way to their intellects, not to their hearts. They think that perhaps some day they will accept it; but they realize that it involves such sacrifices, that they are not prepared at once to surrender to the truth. So they procrastinate; they say, To-morrow, or on some other occasion; next Lent, or next year, I will go into the matter and consider it seriously. And, perhaps, for them that time never comes! At one time they were very near the kingdom of heaven, but they lost it by procrastination.

5. Lastly, we find a small number possessed of that true

[1] Acts xvii. 32. [2] xvii. 32.

nobility of character which distinguished the Berœans; for S. Luke tells us that "certain men clave unto him (S. Paul) and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them."[1] These seem to have been but few, but they were earnest. They not only listened, but they learned; and what they learned they put in practice. They did not procrastinate; they believed, and acted on their belief; for they clave unto S. Paul; they ranged themselves openly upon the side of the truth. One of them, Dionysius the Areopagite, seems to have been a man of exalted position, who added to nobility of station nobility of soul.

III. The people of Athens are fairly typical of those in our world to-day, and their attitude to S. Paul's preaching represents the attitude of many towards Christianity in our own time. Some treat it with contemptuous condescension; others investigate it from idle curiosity; some scoff at all faith in the supernatural; while others, who are well disposed to Christianity, and at heart believe it, are too much entangled in the affairs of this world to become practical Christians, and so put off decisive action on the claims of Christ, and procrastinate sometimes until too late.

How few are like Dionysius the Areopagite, and Damaris! how few like the Berœans, who, with open minds, setting aside their prejudices, search the Scriptures, to see if the truths which the Church teaches have their authority. If we search the Scriptures what shall we find in them?—From beginning to end, almost on every page, we shall find Christ; and if we find Him, we shall be found of Him; for we shall confess Him in this world, and He will confess us before His Father and the angels in heaven.

[1] Acts xvii. 34.

Sermon LXXXIII.

DAVID.

(The Eighth Sunday after Trinity.)

1 CHRONICLES XXIX. 28.

"And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour."

F all the personages brought before us in the Old Testament the most prominent and the most fascinating, because the most intensely human, is the shepherd-king, the warrior-poet, David. As we have just been reading of his last days, it will not be inappropriate if we turn our thoughts to some of the lessons of his life.

There is no one else whose life from youth to old age is so completely set before us in Holy Scripture as David's. Next to him would come Jacob. But though Jacob's life is given us in the Book of Genesis from birth to death, yet we find far less fulness of detail than in David's case.

The last half of the First Book of Samuel is devoted to David's youth; while the record of his reign takes up the whole of the Second Book of Samuel, together with the first two chapters of the First Book of Kings, and the whole of the First Book of Chronicles. Although these tell us with great fulness what David did, it is the Davidic psalms which reveal to us what he really was, which introduce us to the secrets of his inner life, and which permit us to understand the spirit of the man.

The materials for David's history are so abundant that we are able to know him as we know no other Old Testament hero, indeed, as we know no other Bible character,

excepting perhaps S. Paul. But their very abundance forbids us, within the limits of a sermon, to attempt even the briefest review of his life. Let us therefore, rather, this morning single out one or two points from which we may learn something of the character of David, and perhaps the secret of his favour with God and man.

I. He is called by the prophet Samuel "a man after God's own heart," and this title is referred to in the Book of The Acts.[1] And yet his life is stained with grievous sins—adultery and murder in the case of Bath-sheba and Uriah, cruelty to the Ammonites, pride in numbering the people, and untruthfulness in times of difficulty and distress.[2] But, grievous as his sins undoubtedly were, they were severely punished. Indeed, like Jacob, his life was one long penance; for with all his splendid success in war, and with all his royal prosperity in peace, his happiness was marred by domestic affliction, which lasted to the very end of his life—the disgrace of his daughter Tamar, the murder, the fratricide of his son Amnon, the rebellion and death of Absalom; and, in his very last days, the conspiracy of his son Adonijah.[3]

None can say that God passed over David's sins. God loved David. He was "a man after His own heart." But "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."[4] And He certainly chastened David and scourged him for his sins. Some of the sins, those of cruelty and untruth, were the outcome of the barbaric times in which he lived, others the result of passionate impulse. None were habitual. All were earnestly repented of, and their punishment humbly

[1] *Cf.* 1 Sam. xiii. 14; Acts xiii. 22.
[2] *Cf.* 1 Sam. xxvii. 10; 2 Sam. xv. 34; 2 Sam. xi.; xii. 31; xxiv.
[3] *Cf.* 2 Sam xiii.; xv.-xviii.; 1 Kings i. [4] Heb. xii. 6.

accepted as from GOD, and bravely and patiently borne.

But on the other side, where can we find a nobler character than that of David? The days in which he was born were days of disorder, violence and oppression; for though Saul was king, and there was some improvement from the time of the Judges, when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes";[1] yet Saul's reign left much to be desired in the way of security, justice and peace in Israel; and in many parts of the land the people were probably still vassals of the Philistines.

David was born in dark days indeed; but when he died he had established a kingdom and a dynasty. From a mob of frightened serfs he had made a nation, and from an ignorant and semi-idolatrous people he had produced the most religious race in the world.

We see in David many exceptional gifts. He had the power of inspiring love and devotion in an extraordinary degree and in the most diverse people. He was a born leader of men, a great and resourceful warrior, always fighting, and always victorious. And yet, amidst the turmoil and anxiety of such a life, he manifested the characteristics of a deeply religious man. He lived in constant communion with GOD. To GOD he took all his troubles, from Him he sought guidance and strength. Humbly he accepted affliction and chastisement as coming from the hand of a wise and loving Father; and thankfully he ascribed to GOD the successes and victories of his life.

It is, as we have said, in the Book of Psalms that David's true character, his inner life, is revealed. There we read the record of his hopes and fears, of his love, of his thankfulness, of his faith, and of his penitence. Where can we find the expression of more perfect trust in GOD

[1] Judges xxi. 25.

than in the 23rd Psalm—"The Lord is my Shepherd: therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture: and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort . . . Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me . . . Thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Where can we find a more triumphant act of faith in time of impending danger than in the 27th?—"The Lord is my Light and my Salvation; whom then shall I fear: the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?" And then the 51st Psalm has provided for almost three thousand years the words in which every great penitent has expressed his sorrow to God.

Think what the Psalms of David were to his own nation for a thousand years, and then consider what they have been to the Christian Church ever since, forming, as they have, a great part of her Divine Office, furnishing inspired words of penitence, of praise, of faith, of thanksgiving. Indeed, it has been well said that there is no experience of the human soul which cannot find its best expression in the words of David.

II. The point to which I would especially draw your attention is that his life was one which was developed under great adversity. He was at his best in time of trial; for all his great sins belong to the period of his prosperity. To take but one instance—his relations with Saul after he knew Saul's purpose, to kill him. It had been revealed to him by the prophet Samuel that he was to succeed Saul in the kingdom. This was so well recognized that even Jonathan, Saul's son, discussed it with him. And yet he never moved a finger to hasten the time

when he should be king. He was in sore straits, pursued by Saul, as he says, like "a partridge in the mountains," hunted from place to place, dwelling in caves with a handful of outcasts. And twice Saul fell into his power—once at En-gedi,[1] when Saul went in to sleep in the very cave where David and his men were hiding; the other time, in the wilderness of Ziph, when with Abishai he penetrated Saul's camp by night, and took the spear and a cruse of water from Saul's bolster, but spared his life.[2]

How many excuses he might have made for killing Saul, or for allowing his men to kill him, as Abishai actually proposed. He might have argued that Saul was seeking his life, and would show him no mercy if he could get possession of him; so that to kill Saul was permitted by the law of self-preservation. And then GOD had promised him the kingdom; it would be only anticipating GOD'S purpose to give him Saul's throne. But no; David resisted all such temptations. He would not put out his hand to take unlawfully what GOD had promised him; he would not hasten by one hour the time of GOD'S own providence.

What a contrast to Jacob he was in this! Jacob had been promised the birthright; but, instead of waiting till GOD brought about the fulfilment of His promise, Jacob spent his early life in scheming with his mother to get this birthright; and finally deceived his father by simulating his brother Esau, and so obtained his blessing under false pretences. David, on the other hand, waits patiently GOD'S good time, even enduring the most cruel persecution during this period of waiting.

David's character is always grand. In victory over Goliath he is modest; in reverses under Saul's persecution

[1] *Cf.* 1 Sam. xxiv. [2] *Cf.* 1 Sam. xxvi.

he is patient; in Absalom's rebellion he is humble; in success he is generous, pardoning Shimei; as a friend he is stedfast and loyal to Jonathan; as a king, just and considerate for his people's welfare; while as a servant of God he is the man after God's own heart, who has bequeathed to the world some of the most exquisite treasures of its liturgical poetry.

Judging David by his work, too, we see that as a statesman he moulded a collection of scattered tribes into a great nation, founded a great capital, Jerusalem; while as a religious leader he planned and prepared the Temple, arranged its worship, and influenced the religious life of his nation, until it gave place to Christianity.

Yet, with all, he was a man of like passions with us, intensely human, with many faults, with great virtues; but, because of his religious sincerity, the man after God's own heart, the hero of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Sermon LXXXIV.

THE STANDARD OF S. PAUL'S TEACHING.

(The Eighth Sunday after Trinity.)

Acts xx. 26, 27.

"Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

THERE are few more exquisitely pathetic episodes in the life of S. Paul than his farewell at Miletus to the elders of the Ephesian Church. He had spent an unusually long period of his ministry among them, and they had grown to love one another

very dearly. And now they were to part. For S. Paul knew, and had told them, "that they should see his face no more"; and further, that "bonds and afflictions" were to be his lot.

That scene on the sea-shore at Miletus was the prototype of many a scene which has taken place since—the farewell of many a pastor and his flock. It is a beautiful picture; for though sorrow and tears predominate, it tells of a previous joy, the joy of spiritual relationship, the chief joy on earth of the faithful priest, the joy of one who has loved souls with the very love of Christ, and who has known the happiness of helping to mould them into conformity to the pattern of his Master's life—of seeing them grow Christ-like.

And then there is a joy, on the other side, in the pure love of a father in Christ, of one to whom, under GOD, his people owe perhaps all that is best and noblest in life. The deep sorrow of the farewell brings up the long joy of this relationship.

Where, however, the priest has not been faithful, and such a relationship does not exist, the farewell must be very different—on the part of the pastor, filled with bitter memories of work left undone, of opportunities disregarded, of an account which he must give for souls to whom he was sent to minister, but whom he neglected; on the part of the people, a kindly feeling perhaps of sorrow, but without that deep love which is founded on gratitude for the best possessions of the soul.

S. Paul had not only the sorrow of parting with those he loved, but anxiety in regard to his own future. He knew not what would befall him, save what was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that bonds and afflictions were awaiting him.

And this, too, is sometimes one of the sorrows of a priest parting from his people when he has to give up his work on account of failing health, knowing that, in place of the joys of ministering to a loving flock, there await him the bondage of ill health, the afflictions of failing strength.

I. S. Paul's farewell at Miletus was very solemn. There was first a review of his work, ending with the words of my text. Then came an exhortation to watch, and a warning of dangers which he foresaw should come upon them.

What a blessed thing to be able to say, "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." How much it implies!—not only of faithfulness to duty on the part of S. Paul, but of his realization of what would have been the responsibility of unfaithfulness, of keeping back part of the counsel of God, part of the truth as it is in Christ; of keeping it back through fear, or of watering it down to suit the prejudices or worldliness of his hearers. S. Paul implies that to have done such a thing would have rendered him guilty of the blood of the souls who might on this account have failed of salvation.

There has probably never been a time of religious earnestness in the world when theological feeling has not run high. It is only in periods of absolute indifference that no one cares what you teach, that strong theological opinions stir up no opposition.

In S. Paul's time, both in the Jewish Church and in its Christian offspring, religious feeling was very intense—among the Jews, against Christianity, and among the Jewish Christians, against S. Paul's peculiar teaching that

the day of Judaism was over, and that to all men alike was offered the Gospel of Christ, without the conditions and burdens of the Mosaic Law.

To teach what S. Paul believed to be the whole counsel of God, meant to expose himself to the bitterest opposition and persecution, not only from the Jews, but from many of his own fellow-Christians, from the many who were not yet able to accept the catholic position of the Church, but still clung to the observance of the Mosaic Law.

But S. Paul might have argued (and no doubt his friends urged it upon him), Was it necessary to teach all this at once? Would it harm people to keep the Mosaic Law? Might he, therefore, not hold back for awhile his own unpopular views? If he did, he would be able to make Christians at far less cost to himself; yes, *and of far less value to the Church*—Christians who were half Jews.

We know that he did not hold back any part of the truth. As he called the elders of Miletus to witness, he had not shrunk from declaring unto them "all the counsel of God," not only the truth, but the whole truth as God had revealed it to him. And what was the result of this full teaching?—It was twofold. On the one hand, persecution, bonds and affliction awaited him. On the other hand, a depth of affection and fulness of gratitude, such as shown by the Ephesian elders at Miletus, was his requital.

It is one of the rewards of teaching the whole truth, that it appeals to those noble souls who are really seekers after truth, that it wins the best and strongest, and they are worth the cost which has to be paid in enduring persecution; for such souls grasp the truth and hand it on to others, and reward those who have suffered and laboured for them with a deep and lasting affection of which others are not capable.

II. But what lesson has this for us? We live in a time of religious controversy, when the temptation is great to teach only such doctrines as will not provoke opposition; to teach doctrines which may be true as far as they go, but are not the *whole* counsel of God, as we ourselves have received that counsel. There are not a few—indeed, they are probably in the majority—who would argue that there is sufficient elementary Christian truth to be taught, without touching upon questions which are likely to arouse opposition; that it is, therefore, wisest and *safest* to teach only those things about which probably every one is agreed. Such a view may command the majority of votes, but it is absolutely contrary to S. Paul's view of the duty of a Christian teacher. "I have not shunned to declare unto you *all* the counsel of God," he says. "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men." S. Paul evidently did not think that truths upon which all men were agreed would save the soul; for he practically declares that, had he kept back part of the counsel of God, he would have been guilty of the blood of the souls which thereby failed of salvation.

The *safe* man will avoid burning questions, will water down the pure milk of the Word, to accommodate it to the digestion of the lukewarm, will pare down the demands of Christ to suit the religion of the worldly; but when his ministry approaches its close, and his account has to be made up and his work reviewed, this will not enable him to say with S. Paul, "I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." This will not help him to face the bonds and imprisonments which await him when his work is done, in a life, perhaps, of suffering and feebleness, in which nothing could comfort and encourage him, but the thought

of duty done, of truth fearlessly taught, and of souls won to Christ. But without this comfort how sad his lot. And when he looks forward to the last great day, when he shall have to render to the Judge an account of his stewardship, the recollection that he kept out of trouble and chose the easiest way will not give him boldness in the Day of Judgment.

III. But what may we understand by "all the counsel of God"?—Two classes of teaching.

1. First, the elementary doctrines of Christianity, comprehended under the words "faith" and "repentance." This seems very simple, but it involves a great deal of teaching; for "faith" means the *whole* faith, *all* the doctrines of the Christian Creed, not merely those that are popular. And then, too, "repentance" implies a great deal more than a mere sentimental feeling of regret for our sins. It implies deep contrition, sincere confession, and earnest purpose of amendment. It demands that we should give up *all* that we know to be sinful, not that we should retain certain sins, and only give up those which in the eyes of the world are particularly glaring. It requires that we shall accept the code of conduct taught us in the Sermon on the Mount, that is, that we shall live a consistent, Christian life.

2. And then, the other class of teaching—of which, unfortunately, we have very little in our day—is the teaching of those mysteries of faith and love which are the food of great souls, and which help to produce saints. S. Paul wrote reproachfully to his Corinthian converts that he fed them with milk, not with meat.[1] But he gives as the reason, that they were not able to bear strong meat; for

[1] *Cf.* 1 Cor. iii. 2, 3.

they were yet carnal. There were among them envying, strife and divisions, and scandals of all sorts.

He did not mean for a moment to suggest that milk was sufficient as a food for all men and all times, but only for beginners, for those who were carnal and worldly. For others, he fed them with the strong meat of the Word, he did not shun to declare unto them the whole counsel of God. In reading his Epistles we learn what this was—on the one hand, the deep mysteries of faith, feeding the intellect; on the other, the glorious revelations of love, kindling souls, and binding them into the closest communion with God through love.

In how many parishes do we find this latter teaching, a treatment of the great questions which thoughtful men may ask about God and His revelation; and still more, instruction in that branch of theology which deals with the intercourse of the soul with God? Perhaps the reason we find so few great saints in our parishes is because there is so little of this higher teaching for the soul. Perhaps, too, the falling off of candidates for Holy Orders, and of volunteers for missionary fields, may be traced to the same cause—a shrinking from declaring to men the whole counsel of God, the substitution of rhetorical platitudes for the plain preaching of the Word of God, which tells of God's love for the soul, of the soul's infinite capacity for God, and of the glorious work to which God calls great souls.

Sermon LXXXV.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA.

(The Ninth Sunday after Trinity.)

1 KINGS X. 1.

"And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the Name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions."

THE history of the queen of Sheba is a parable of the life of many a soul in this world. In her own country, far away from Jerusalem, she "heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the Name of the Lord," and because of what she heard she undertook a long, weary and dangerous journey to Jerusalem.

In this world, the country of our exile, many hear of the fame, of the wisdom and love, of the Son of David, our Lord Jesus Christ; and more, that He has invited them to come to Him, saying, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."[1] And because of what they have heard, many souls begin that journey, for some so short, for others exceeding long, which leads at last to Jesus Christ, reigning in Jerusalem —reigning in His Church.

I. The queen of Sheba made many preparations for her journey. There was much that she had to leave behind —her crown, her possessions, those she loved—all but the train of servants and friends who were ready to accompany her, all but the spices, gold, and precious stones, which

[1] S. Matt. xi. 28.

she carried, not for herself, but as an offering to the king.

We cannot come to Christ without leaving much behind, which, from the world's point of view, is attractive. We shall, perhaps, have to leave and to lose worldly friends who are very dear to us, worldly honours which once we prized. And what we are able to bring with us we must bring as an offering to our Lord. For if we would be wholly His, we must offer not only all that we have, but all that we are; not only our possessions, but our hearts, ourselves.

There is one point in the story of the queen of Sheba which is almost unique in the history of travellers, and it is that she came *seeking* wisdom and *bringing* gold. History is full of the record of journeys undertaken and hardships endured in the search for gold. In classic story we read of the quest of the *Golden* Fleece; in more modern days, of the search for the El Dorado. But here is the record of a royal traveller, a woman, who *brings* gold and *seeks* for wisdom. Like the pearl merchant of the Gospel, she had found many goodly pearls, but she was ready to part with them all, that she might possess the pearl of great price—the knowledge of truth.

Then there were the difficulties of her journey. If, as there is no reason to doubt, she came from Yemen in southern Arabia, she must have travelled some three thousand miles before she returned to her kingdom. And journeys in those days were difficult, and tedious, and full of danger. She crossed deserts, she braved many hardships, though only a woman, in her search for wisdom. Indeed, our Lord in the Gospel draws attention to this point—the great length of the journey. He says, "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this

generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here."[1]

In coming to Christ, for some of us the journey is easy; but for many it is made difficult by opposition of various kinds. There is the opposition of friends who try to discourage us, like the people who rebuked Bartimæus when he cried to our Lord, saying, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me"; for they "rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: *but he cried so much the more,* Thou Son of David, have mercy on me."[2] There is the opposition even of our Lord Himself when He tries our faith and perseverance, as He did in the case of the woman of Canaan,[3] repulsing her again and again, only that He might draw out and strengthen her faith and reward it exceeding abundantly.

II. Then we may consider the reward of her journey, what she saw, and what she heard, and what she received, when she came to Jerusalem.

We read that, "When the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom."

So with those who truly seek, and, therefore, really find Christ. They bear witness that it was a true report they heard from others who had found Him; nay, more; that the half was not told them. And if those who seek and find Him here in His Church can say this, how much more

[1] S. Matt. xii. 42. [2] *Cf.* S. Luke xviii. 35-40. [3] *Cf.* S. Matt. xv. 22-29.

those blessed ones who even now see the King in unveiled beauty in heaven itself!

Then the gifts—king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. She brought him much—"an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones." In her own land how magnificent the treasure she prepared must have seemed! But, compared with the riches of Solomon, how must the fine gold have become dim. However, she brought it. It was her best, and Solomon accepted it.

And what did he give her in return?—All her desire, whatsoever she asked. How wonderful a type of the true Solomon, Who says to us, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do."[1] But more, he gave her, beside that, of his own royal bounty—what we are not told; it is left to our imagination.

So our Lord gives to us who ask "more than either we desire or deserve"; all things needful for body and soul; our daily bread, our friends; and, above all, the greatest Gift, the gift of Himself to us in our Communions. This corresponds to the unnamed gift of Solomon, which he gave of his royal bounty. For this is the greatest of all the gifts of grace, and is different to each one, according to his faith, his love, and his need.

III. Then there is the journey back and the life in her own country. "So she turned and went to her own country." We may pass over the difficulties of the journey back, and think of the queen in her own land, often pondering over and talking about what she had heard and seen at

[1] S. John xiv. 13.

Jerusalem, never weary of praising the wisdom and glory of Solomon. Tradition tells us that she ordered the government of her kingdom according to what she had learned from Solomon. As difficulties arose and trials pressed upon her, how she must have longed for the counsel of Solomon to guide her.

And we, when we have found Christ, and He has answered all our questions, and taught us all the laws of His kingdom, taught us how we are to govern that kingdom which is within us, by enthroning Him there as King; we must go back to our life in the world; for there is work to be done, temptation to be met and conquered, the cross to be borne, the crown to be won!

But, unlike the queen of Sheba, we do not merely ponder on what we once saw and heard, and wish for counsel and guidance in our difficulties. For when we have found Christ He never leaves us. We go back to our work in the world; but He is with us, in us, always ready to answer our questions, to guide us in our difficulties, to strengthen us in our temptations, to comfort us in our sorrows. He never leaves us until, passing with Him through the valley of the shadow of death, after waiting for awhile in His antechamber, and being cleansed there from all trace of imperfection or sin, we enter His kingdom in heaven, and see Him on the throne of His glory.

Then, in a higher sense shall we say, "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of Thy acts and of Thy wisdom. . . . And, behold, the half was not told me: Thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are Thy men, happy are these Thy servants, which stand continually before Thee, and that hear Thy wisdom."

If the story of the queen of Sheba is a parable of the life of the soul seeking Christ in this world, it is also a parable of the experiences of the soul which has found Christ in this world and is following Him in the way which leads to life everlasting. There we shall see the King in His beauty in the land of far distances; there we shall commune with Him of all that is in our heart; there we shall receive from Him gifts, all that we can desire, all of which we are capable. We shall see Him as He is, and we shall be like Him, and our joy and happiness will know no change, will have no end.

Sermon LXXXVI.

A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE.

(The Ninth Sunday after Trinity.)

ACTS XXIV. 16.

"Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward GOD, and toward men."

SAINT PAUL in his defence before Felix says, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence"; and in his speech before the Sanhedrim, recorded in the previous chapter, he makes a similar statement, saying, "I have lived in all good conscience before GOD until this day."[1] The word translated "exercise" implies that S. Paul laboured, strove, took pains, to keep his conscience void of offence. And this suggests to us the question, what

[1] Acts xxiii. 1.

does S. Paul mean by "conscience," and what do *we* understand by it?

In S. Paul's use of the word, conscience is not so much a guide in life and conduct, as the *judge* within ourselves, who passes judgment upon our actions after they are done. The very word "conscience" and its Greek equivalent (συνείδησις) signifies this; for it means literally a co-knowledge, that is, the reflective judgment which a man has by the side of the original consciousness of an action. We have not only a consciousness at the time of performing any action, but the power, and indeed the habit, of afterwards reflecting upon what we have done, calling it before the bar of our moral sense, passing judgment upon the action; and where it has been an evil act this occurs again and again; for often we cannot get rid of the sting of accusing conscience.

This sense of the word we may trace back to the Stoics, and we shall see it will correspond very much with what we are accustomed to call "self-examination." And, indeed, there is a very interesting passage in Seneca, the great Stoic, who was contemporary with S. Paul and was the tutor of Nero. It is as follows: "When the light is removed out of sight, and my wife, who is by this time aware of my practice, is now silent, I pass the whole of my day under examination, and I review my deeds and words; I hide nothing from myself; I pass over nothing."[1]

Hence, we see that among the ancients conscience was restricted to reflection upon past acts and judgment upon them, and this is the sense in which S. Paul ordinarily uses the word; for we find in speaking of the Gentiles in the Epistle to the Romans he says, "In that they show the

[1] "De Ira" iii. 36, quoted in Lightfoot, Philip, pp. 281, 282.

work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing joint witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them."[1]

The conception of conscience as the *guide* of conduct is a later development of Christianity, though it is foreshadowed in S. Paul's use of the word in the Epistle to the Corinthians.[2] It has been suggested that the explanation of the limited application of conscience among the Jews, may be found in the fact that there was little room for any other action of conscience with them, since the law, with its positive code of minute rules, left little opportunity for the action of conscience, otherwise than reflecting on the fidelity with which the law had been kept. But S. Paul tells us that "the law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ."[3]

Under the school-master it was a question of keeping positive rules, and this prepared the way for Christ to teach, not *rules*, but great *principles* of action. For while Christianity has, of course, its precepts, yet for the most part they consist of principles which are to be applied to particular cases, and not of a series of rules to meet each case. But this application of principles to meet cases as they arise is precisely that which develops the moral sense in man and gives opportunity for the exercise of conscience as a *guide* to conduct, and not only as a judge of past actions.

There is a tendency among us often to personify words; so that many speak and think of conscience as though it were a separate and independent power of the soul, like the intellect or the will. Whereas it is really only the practical judgment of the intellect, or, as we should say,

[1] *Cf.* Rom. ii. 15. [2] *Cf.* 1 Cor. viii. 7. [3] Gal. iii. 24.

the moral sense in us. Intellect acts in two ways; speculatively, in determining what is *true;* and practically, in deciding what is *right.* That is to say, both dogma and morals come under the sphere of intellect; and conscience is not a separate faculty of the soul, but is simply that practical judgment of the intellect which we call "moral sense."

But we must observe that conscience is not an infallible guide; it is not the voice of God within us, unless it be educated and enlightened to recognize God's voice. We have a good illustration of this in S. Paul himself; for he bears witness that he always has striven to have a conscience void of offence. He does not by this mean that he had no consciousness of sin or guilt towards God; for, on the contrary, he elsewhere speaks of himself as the "chief of sinners." [1] But he does assert that he had always lived conscientiously; as a Jew, loyally and faithfully living up to the teachings of Judaism; and that in becoming a Christian, he acted with the approval of his conscience. And yet as a Jew he had persecuted Christians, had consented to S. Stephen's death; but this, doubtless, he did conscientiously, even though he afterwards came to see how wrongful it was.

So that we learn from S. Paul's own experience that conscience is not an infallible guide. Indeed, some of the greatest crimes in history were, doubtless, committed by men who were quite conscientious. The burning of people on account of their religious opinions, which disgraced the annals of the 16th century, was, doubtless, often done with a strong conviction that it was right to do it; and certainly some monarchs did what they considered their duty in this with great grief and reluctance.

[1] *Cf.* 1 Tim. i. 15.

Conscience, then, has to be educated by the teachings of Christianity; for an uneducated conscience is quite as likely to lead a person wrong as right; and the more we are imbued with the principles and teachings of Christ, the more will our conscience guide us in accordance with those principles.

The moral sense in man is very delicate, and, if trifled with, soon becomes warped or ruined. It is like some delicate piece of mechanism, a watch, for instance, which, if rightly treated, keeps excellent time; but, if trifled with, can no longer be relied upon to tell us the time, and sometimes stops altogether. Conscience, if it is to be a trusted guide of life and conduct, needs to be promptly and habitually obeyed. If it is trifled with, if we try to stifle its voice, or put off obeying it; or, worse still, act in opposition to it, conscience will soon lose its sensitiveness; and, passing through various stages of degeneracy will finally become atrophied.

The first stage in this downward course, the result of want of promptness in obeying the dictates of conscience, is often an uncertainty of judgment—we are unable to make up our mind, because conscience does not speak clearly. It is like the watch, which, when first trifled with, loses its accuracy; it does not stop all at once, but we can no longer rely upon it to tell us the correct time.

A further stage in moral degeneracy is reached when conscience becomes the echo of our own desires. We see this wonderfully illustrated in the history of Balaam. When the messengers of Balak came to ask him to come and curse the Israelites, Balaam sought counsel of God; and the next morning, without any hesitation, said unto the princes of Balak, "The Lord refuseth to give me leave

to go with you."[1] When they came again, offering greater bribes, Balaam said, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my GOD, to do less or more. Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more."[2]

GOD had clearly told him he was not to go; but the greater bribes offered appeal to his besetting sin of covetousness, and he determines to try to get a different answer from GOD, the GOD of Whom he himself bore witness that "GOD is not a man, that He should lie; neither the Son of man, that He should repent."[3]

Balaam did what many do at all times; he wrestled with his conscience, until he forced it to utter what he wished; he made it the mere echo of his own inclinations, and then persuaded himself that it was the Voice of GOD giving him leave to go.

It is no rare thing to find men's consciences in this state. They are able, as the result of a habit of wrestling with conscience, to make it respond in accordance with their own interest or desire.

The last stage of the ruin of conscience is the entire loss of moral sense. From a long course of neglect conscience becomes atrophied, and men can go on in sin without their conscience reproaching them at all.

S. Paul points out that we must *exercise* ourselves to have a conscience void of offence, *both* towards GOD, and towards man. There is a great danger in our own age of striving only for the latter, to be a just man, a kindly man, careful never to wrong a neighbour either in word or deed. Many a man prides himself on this, and is spoken

[1] Num. xxii. 13. [2] Num. xxii. 18, 19. [3] Num. xxiii. 19.

of as a good man because he fulfils his obligations to his neighbour, who is yet most *unjust* in regard to GOD, who takes no thought to have his conscience void of offence towards GOD. We find men who claim to be considered conscientious men, neglecting absolutely their religious duties, the service of GOD, the worship of GOD; and the reason is, of course, that their conscience is not educated, not enlightened. The only sphere of duty they recognize is in this world and in their relation to their fellow-man.

Hence, in examining ourselves in regard to our conscience, we must first, and before all things, exercise ourselves to have a conscience void of offence towards GOD; and then, but quite second, since it is the result of this, to have a conscience void of offence towards man.

Sermon LXXXVII.

THE SIN OF JEROBOAM.

(The Tenth Sunday after Trinity.)

1 KINGS XII. 28.

"Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

"JEROBOAM, the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin." These words are the antiphon of the history of the ten tribes, of the kingdom established by Jeroboam. More than twenty times, Jeroboam's sin is referred to in Holy Scripture, and of the nineteen kings who reigned over the kingdom of Israel of no less than fifteen are we told that he followed the sin of Jeroboam, "which made Israel to sin." There is no other instance of a sin of such long enduring effect.

The poison which Jeroboam instilled into the kingdom of Israel was never eliminated, and it finally wrought the destruction of the kingdom. For in the account of the final destruction of Samaria and the captivity of the ten tribes, the disaster is distinctly traced back to the sin of Jeroboam. Since we read that "the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day."[1] From that captivity, as

[1] 2 Kings xvii. 22, 23.

we know, ten tribes never came back. As a nation they were lost, and their destruction was the result of the working out of the sin of Jeroboam.

But throughout their long history God did not forsake them. Some of the greatest of the prophets were sent to them to bring them back to God; for the prophets Elijah and Elisha, Micah, Joel, Amos, and Hosea, were all sent to prophesy to the northern kingdom, and to bring back the people, not to a union with the kings of Judah, but to repentance, and to the true religion of their forefathers.

I. But what was the sin of Jeroboam? It was not the successful rebellion against Rehoboam, which divided the nation into two kingdoms; since we are distinctly told that this was of God. That is to say, it was the outcome of political misrule and of religious deterioration, and as a punishment God permitted the breaking up of Solomon's splendid kingdom. Rehoboam's folly and Jeroboam's ambition were the immediate causes, but there were moral causes which can be traced much further back, and without which the division would not have occurred.

God gave the kingdom to Jeroboam. For the prophet Ahijah was sent to announce to Jeroboam, "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee";[1] the reason assigned being the religious degeneracy under Solomon. For, while the worship of Jehovah was kept up in Solomon's Temple, alongside of it he allowed the worship of Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom.

God gave the kingdom to Jeroboam. And if Jeroboam

[1] 1 Kings xi. 31.

had trusted God and served Him, there is no reason to doubt that God would have blessed and prospered his reign. But, instead of trusting God, Jeroboam at once devised a policy, which, from a worldly point of view, doubtless seemed wise, but which was based upon an absolute disregard of the sacredness of religion.

Jeroboam feared that if his people went up to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem to sacrifice, that is to say, remained faithful to the religion of their forefathers as revealed to them by God, they might return to their former allegiance to the dynasty of David. And so he devised a religion which was like the old religion, but without those features which he deemed dangerous to his own power and to the continuance of the newly-founded kingdom. In other words, instead of religion ruling the state, he determined that the state should rule the religion of his people, and, from motives of policy, he both *changed* and *cheapened* the worship of God in his kingdom.

Jeroboam accordingly substituted for the Temple at Jerusalem the old sanctuaries at Beth-el and Dan, and there set up the worship of God under the form of a golden calf.

We must here correct a mistake into which many fall—the error of regarding this as a revival of the calf worship of Egypt, such as Aaron had attempted with the golden calf. This was certainly not the case. Had it been, Jeroboam's sin would simply have been the sin of idolatry, from which, however, it is carefully distinguished in Holy Scripture. His sin is confined to the kingdom of Israel; for none of the kings of Judah are accused of it; while, on the other hand, it was in Judah, and not in Israel, that idolatry prevailed. Of the kings of Israel, only Ahab and

his two sons were guilty of idolatry; whereas, of the kings of Judah, only five were free from it.

II. What, then, was Jeroboam's sin?—It was the sin of heresy and schism—of schism in separating himself and his people from the Church of GOD; and of heresy, in choosing certain methods of worshipping GOD, instead of those which GOD Himself had instituted. For the word "heresy" in its original sense means a "choosing." It is generally used of doctrine only, but it may well be applied to practices which, as in Jeroboam's case, have their origin in false doctrine. This *choosing* involved a *changing* of the religion of his kingdom.

1. First, he changed the place of worship. GOD had clearly revealed, both through David and Solomon, that there was to be but one sanctuary for the whole nation. This divine choice was publicly proclaimed at the dedication of the Temple. And when Ahijah brought to Jeroboam the message from GOD that he should rule over ten tribes, Ahijah twice reminded him that Jerusalem was the city which GOD had chosen out of all the tribes to put His Name there. Jeroboam, therefore, in making this change of place, was consciously disregarding GOD's Will. And the excuse was simply *policy*, that the political exigencies of the time required him to change the place which GOD had chosen for the one sanctuary of the nation.

2. Then he changed the *mode* of worship. Every detail had been carefully prescribed by GOD through Moses, and a warning had been added against changing it.[1] The second commandment had forbidden the making of graven images. This, however, he disregards, in all probability pointing out to the people that the calf was not to be con-

[1] *Cf.* Deut. iv. 2; xii. 32.

sidered as an object of religious worship, and therefore of idolatry, but as a symbol of the God Who had brought them out of Egypt. The change in the mode of worship was absolutely contrary to God's revealed Will; but Jeroboam made the change in accordance with what he deemed the best policy for the state.

3. He changed the festivals of the Church. Instead of keeping the Feast of Tabernacles at the time appointed by God, he invented a feast of his own, which he thought would come at a season more convenient for the people.[1]

4. Jeroboam's sin, as we have already said, was not only the sin of *changing* the religion of his people, but of *cheapening* it; for he made "of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth."[2]

In starting this new religion Jeroboam had to get new priests, since the priests of the true Church naturally adhered to the true religion. And so he took, as our translation renders it, "of the lowest of the people." This may, perhaps, mean only that he took of every class, whoever offered himself, entirely disregarding the provision that the priesthood should be of the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron. Thus he cheapened religion. Instead of a class brought up from childhood in the services of the Temple, and carefully trained to minister before God, he allowed any one, without any preparation, on offering sacrifice, to assume to himself the ministry which God had so explicitly limited to the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron.

[1] *Cf.* 1 Kings xii. 32, 33. [2] 1 Kings xiii. 33, 34.

III. The story of Jeroboam contains many lessons for the Christian Church of every age.

1. The first lesson is the direful effect of religious degeneracy upon a nation's life. The splendid kingdom of Solomon was split in two as a punishment for the religious deterioration of Solomon's reign; and the great kingdom of Jeroboam was absolutely ruined, and finally disappeared, as the result of Jeroboam's sin in disregarding the revealed Will of God with respect to the laws of worship.

2. Then we are taught the danger of mixing up politics with religion. This has been the curse of the Catholic Church since the days when Constantine became nominally a Christian. And no one can read the history of the Church of England without observing its baneful effects upon religion in every century, from the time of the Norman Conquest to our own day, and especially since the Reformation.

When state politics are allowed to change, either in doctrine or practice, the religion of the kingdom, the teachings of the Church, nothing but evil can ensue. This is evil of our own day—and it is painfully evident how disastrous is that Erastianism, which is ever ready to sacrifice the doctrine, discipline, and worship, of the Church of England, to the politics of the party in power.

3. Again, from Jeroboam's sin we may take warning against the temptation to cheapen religion, to make of the lowest of the people priests in the high places; to accept all candidates, without requiring from them a high educational and moral standard. The result of such action is generally twofold: to repel from the priesthood those who would best adorn it, and to lower the respect for the priesthood among the laity.

The following of Jeroboam's example has led to the babel of sects in England, and the bitterness of sectarianism, from which the country now suffers. The political dissenter is the outcome of Jeroboam's principles of regarding religion as always subservient to political expediency. For in sectarianism we see a change of place from church to chapel, a change of mode of worship from the sacrificial and sacramental worship of the Church to the preaching of the conventicle, a disregard of the seasons of the Christian Year, and a general cheapening of religion. Such was the result in the kingdom of Israel. Such is the result of all schismatical worship.

Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin, left the poison of his sin working in his kingdom till it destroyed it. And against a similar poison we are taught to pray in the Litany, "From all heresy and schism, good Lord, deliver us"; for its effects are always disastrous to the religion of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Sermon LXXXVIII.

HEAVENLY VISIONS.

(The Tenth Sunday after Trinity.)

ACTS XXVI. 19.

"Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

IN the Book of the prophet Joel we are told that one of the characteristics of the Messianic kingdom was to be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, producing certain manifestations. The prophet says, "It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions."[1] And in S. Peter's first sermon on the Day of Pentecost he claims the fulfilment of this prophecy in the manifestations of the working of the Holy Ghost on that occasion.

That young men should see visions, and old men dream dreams, is not, however, dependent upon the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; for it is natural for young men to see visions, that is, to live in the future; and for old men to dream dreams, to live in the past. But that which is dependent upon the gift of the Holy Spirit in Christ's kingdom is the *character* of these visions and dreams.

Before Christ came, before the Holy Spirit was given, many young men had visions which were noble, but probably nearly all were coloured by a spirit of selfishness. The

[1] Joel ii. 28.

vision may have been noble, in that it was a vision of heroic deeds, of splendid successes; but self was the central figure of the vision, and success, admiration, the praise of men, were all prominent features in it. But under the reign of Christ, and through the influence of His Spirit, this is changed. Young men still see visions, and they are noble visions; but the glory of God takes the place of the glory of self; and instead of success, admiration, and the praise of men being regarded as the chief end of life, we find that to do God's Will, to finish God's work, to be a blessing to our fellow-men, to minister to the suffering, to raise the fallen, to encourage the hopeless, are among the most splendid features of the visions of the Christian.

All young men have their visions; for this is one of the characteristics of youth. Most old men have their dreams; for this belongs to old age. But the dreams, we must remember, depend upon and are intimately connected with the visions. The young men who had noble visions, and have not been disobedient to them, when they are old will have happy dreams; while those whose visions have been sordid or earthly—or worse—will be haunted in their old age with recollections of an ill-spent life.

I. As a young man, S. Paul doubtless had his visions of future greatness, of an exalted position in the councils of his Church and nation. And if he was, as many think, a member of the Sanhedrim, those ambitions were to no small extent realized. The fact that after the death of Stephen he went to Damascus with letters from the high priest, authorizing him to bind any Christians he might find, whether men or women, and to bring them to Jerusalem, shows that he was at least a person of some import-

ance, if not a member of the Sanhedrim. He had, probably, his schemes and theories for the advancement of his Church and nation, and in his attempts to crush out Christianity he was, doubtless, carrying out these schemes.

But one day on the road to Damascus he had a vision, which surpassed in brightness and overwhelming effect, not only all other visions he had ever had, but probably those which any man ever had. This vision of S. Paul was, however, not only a vision of glory, but of suffering and humiliation. It revealed, in the future beyond the grave, a glory unspeakable, but in this life, suffering, opposition, persecution, and humiliation.

This vision changed all S. Paul's views of life, changed his course of action, and reduced him, from his proud position as a rising leader among the Jews, to the condition of an outcast, and, in the eyes of his friends, of an apostate!

This vision too became the central point of his life. He never forgot it. He was never tired of telling about it. He could not explain his life and conduct without reference to it, as we see in his defence before Agrippa. And he was not disobedient to it, though obedience cost him the sacrifice of everything he once held dear—the stultifying of his past life, the abandonment of his hopes and ambitions, the loss of his friends, the surrender of the prejudices and beliefs of a lifetime! Yet, as we are told in the text, he did not disobey the heavenly vision.

And so, when years had passed, and he could speak of himself as Paul the aged, he had his dreams—and they were happy ones. For he could say, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have

kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."[1]

II. Has not S. Paul's history a very real message to us all, but especially to those among us who are still young? What have been our visions? For we have all of us had visions. Have they been "heavenly" visions, or of the earth, earthy? Have they been of noble deeds done for the glory of GOD, done for the good of our fellow-men? Or have they been merely of worldly ambitions and successes? What has been their characteristic—selfishness or unselfishness? Has GOD spoken to you? Has He revealed to you work to be done, sacrifices to be made? And have you been obedient or disobedient to the heavenly vision?

How great an influence in a young man's life are the visions in which he indulges! It is of the nature of youth to have visions, many visions; to live in the future. And these visions will depend for their colour, not a little, on the character of the young man who has them. And that character is the result of many forces—of heredity, of training, of environment. The visions will be governed largely by the principles which guide that young man's life, by the end and object which he has set before him as the true purpose of his life. And yet the converse of this is also true—that the visions which depend upon character have immense influence in shaping character.

But even under unfavourable conditions most men, at one time or another in life, have heavenly visions. GOD speaks to them. His light shines upon their path, shines in their soul—not with the overpowering brilliancy of the

[1] 2 S. Tim. iv. 6-8.

light which blinded S. Paul, but with sufficient power to attract their attention, and to win a recognition from their nobler self. Then comes the question, the struggle. Shall I obey it, or not? To obey the heavenly vision means often to give up many earthly visions, to lay aside ambitions which have filled the heart, to disappoint, perhaps, worldly friends. And yet, if we have seen a heavenly vision, how can we dare to disobey it?

But there is a point worth our careful consideration. We know, as a matter of absolute certainty, that most of the visions of worldly success which young men have prove mirages, which lead them on in frantic efforts to grasp what always eludes them, and which end, for the most part, by leaving them disillusioned, but ruined in hope and heart.

How few attain worldly success, realize their earthly visions!—perhaps not more than one or two in a thousand—and of those few, do any of them find happiness as their reward? There is a certain interest and excitement in striving for success in this world, but how little enjoyment when it is actually attained! Is worldly success, then, worth the devotion of a life?

On the other side, we may place the heavenly visions. Few, perhaps, realize these, because few persevere in their pursuit. But they differ from the earthly visions, in that *all who persevere* are certain to succeed. The pursuit of the heavenly vision leads us, however, into difficult paths, into what Christ describes as "the narrow way." The pursuit requires courage; nay, more—grace; but that grace is freely given to all who seek it, and the end is happiness both here and hereafter!

Soon we shall be growing old, and visions will give

place to dreams. And then our dreams will depend upon the character of our visions. How bright are the dreams of the aged servant of God who began life with heavenly visions, and, as life ends, can say, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

As we read the story of S. Paul's life let us ask ourselves some questions. Have I ever had a heavenly vision? Has God ever shown me what He would have me to do? Have I asked Him to show me, to tell me, what work He has for me in this world? And then, have I been disobedient to the vision, to the Voice of God? Dare I continue to disobey it? Must I not so strive to live in the pursuit of my best ideals, that I may be able to say when I grow old, when I come to die, Thank God, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

Sermon LXXXIX.

ELIJAH'S CHALLENGE.

(The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.)

1 KINGS XVIII. 21.

"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be GOD, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him."

THE scene on Mount Carmel is one of the most dramatic in Holy Scripture. There can be little doubt about the spot where the great drama was acted. Carmel is a mountain ridge some twelve miles in length. Where it dips into the waters of the Mediterranean the headland is six hundred feet in height, but it was at a point overlooking the plain of Esdraelon, and a thousand feet above it, that Elijah's sacrifice was offered.

There we find near the summit a plateau which would accommodate a large number of people; and even from the plain below, the fire descending from heaven would be visible. Grouped around were the spectators, a great multitude, representing "all Israel," who had been summoned by Ahab at Elijah's command. The king himself was amongst them, and before them the contestants; on the one side, four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, strong in the certainty of royal favour; on the other side, one old man, the prophet of the true GOD, Elijah.

At once Elijah utters his challenge, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be GOD, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him." But the people are silent.

They are not yet prepared to make the great decision. So Elijah proposes a test. Each shall prepare a sacrifice in the sight of the people, so that there can be no deception. Each shall call upon their own GOD, and the GOD who answers by fire shall be recognized as the true GOD.

The test is accepted. The prophets of Baal prepare their sacrifice, and from morning till noon call upon the name of Baal. At noon Elijah mocks them, and stimulated by his taunts they "cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them." The hours pass. The tensity of feeling among the people becomes painful.

At last, as the hour for the offering of the evening sacrifice draws near, Elijah calls the people to him, and in their sight repairs the ruined Altar of Jehovah, lays upon it the sacrifice, drenches it with water again and again, to show them that there can be no deception. And then, trusting in his GOD, he utters the prayer of faith, in response to which fire comes down from heaven and consumes the sacrifice; while the fickle people fall on their faces, crying, "The Lord, He is the GOD; the Lord, He is the GOD."

The slaughter of the prophets of Baal and the descent of abundance of rain follow.

I. There are few stories in Holy Scripture more familiar to us than this, since it attracts and compels our attention by its very grandeur. But it is to the scene on Carmel that our thoughts are directed; and the events which led up to that scene and made it possible are probably passed over by most people unnoticed. Let us, therefore, consider these to-day.

All great changes, whether in nature, politics, or religion, though their accomplishment may be sudden, are prepared for by the gradual working of various forces,

often hidden, but not the less effective on that account. In nature, the eruption of a volcano is overwhelmingly sudden, but the forces which produce it have been working in the bowels of the earth for years. In politics, the revolution which upsets a throne or overthrows a dynasty often comes unexpectedly; but afterwards, those who look back can trace a long way back the various social and political forces which led up to it.

So in religion we see the same law at work preparing for the different revivals which occur from time to time. In its most tremendous effect we may point to the forces at work for centuries before the Reformation. Less in degree, but of the same kind, we may trace those forces which prepared for that great revival of religion in our own land, in which we have been privileged to have some share, and which we speak of as "The Catholic Movement" in England.

We should therefore look for, and I think we shall find, similar forces at work preparing for the religious revolution in Ahab's reign—the overthrow of the prophets of Baal, and the restoration, short as it was, of the worship of Jehovah.

Ahab, under the influence of his wicked queen Jezebel, had introduced idolatry in the form of Baal worship, the worship of the powers of nature. Some four years before a drought had begun, which, by its extraordinary continuance, had resulted in the destruction of pasture for the cattle and of the fruits of the earth for the people. So that for some time past the land had endured all the horrors of famine. And now, in the middle of the fourth year of the drought, the people were reduced to the utmost extremity. Not only the cattle, but men, women, and children, doubtless, were dying in numbers of starvation.

The drought had been foretold by Elijah as GOD's judgment upon the nation for the sin of forsaking the GOD of their fathers and turning back to the grossest idolatry. The drought had been proclaimed by Elijah, and at first resulted in the persecution of the prophets of the Lord, and probably of all who were faithful in their worship of Jehovah. In the beginning the persecution had, perhaps, been popular with the people, since, doubtless, Ahab and his prophets blamed Elijah for the drought, and promised that when Elijah was slain, and the worship of Jehovah exterminated, Baal, the god of nature, would send abundant blessings upon the land.

The persecution seemed to be successful, since the prophets disappeared from the land, some, doubtless, falling victims to Ahab's cruelty; others, as we know, concealed and fed by Obadiah, and perhaps by others like him, who were true to their faith, even though they had to serve so wicked a master as Ahab. But the persecution failed, in that the ringleader escaped. Ahab sent everywhere, and offered great rewards, but he could not find Elijah. We know that GOD protected Elijah, first, by the brook Cherith, afterwards in the widow's house at Zarephath.

As, however, the months and years rolled on, and the heavens became as brass, and the land as iron, and the prophets of Baal were unable either to kill Elijah or to break the drought, the temper of the people underwent a gradual change. Their faith in Baal grew weak, and a conviction slowly took its place, that the GOD Whom they had forsaken and sinned against was the only true GOD.

It was at this moment that Elijah, at the command of GOD, came boldly forth from his hiding-place and uttered his challenge. The forces had been at work preparing the

people's heart for the change. They were halting between two opinions. And we must remember that the word translated "halt" does not mean "standing still," but "limping." Elijah's question, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" does not, therefore, imply that the people were holding aloof from both religions, but that they were following neither with full conviction and with all their strength. They probably outwardly conformed to what was then the state religion—the worship of Baal—while in their hearts they had begun to long for the restoration of the worship of Jehovah. But they had not the courage of their convictions. And so they were in the condition described by Elijah, limping along in their religious life, following neither Baal nor God with earnestness. The result of the test which Elijah proposed, for the time, changed this halting into a grateful recognition of the true God, as the plenteous rain brought relief from the famine.

II. In our own day, how much halting there is, both on the part of Christians and on the part of those who are not Christians; on the part of Christians who are afraid to be altogether of the world, worldly, and yet have not courage to be altogether of God, godly. So they go on their Christian course, not running the way of God's commandments, but limping, and therefore making no progress.

On the other hand, there are those who are not Christians, that is to say, who make no Christian profession, who claim to be satisfied with the things of this world, and yet who at times, under God's manifest dealings with them, realize the vanity of the world, the unsatisfactory character of its rewards, the emptiness of what it calls "happiness." In times of severe sickness, when they are brought face to face with death; in times of bitter sorrow,

when they lose those they love; in times of adversity, when they have an opportunity of testing the value of worldly friends, they learn the worthlessness and vanity of the world in which they trusted; and though they may not have courage at once openly to return to GOD, yet they have many heart-searchings, many doubts and fears. To both parties GOD'S message comes, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be GOD, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him."

GOD'S prophets now cannot appeal to material fire descending from heaven, as the sign of the truth of their message; but they can appeal to that spiritual fire which Christ came to kindle on this earth—the love of Christ which constraineth us, which teacheth us to lead unselfish lives. For this is the regenerating force amidst the world's corrupting influences, which, feeding upon sacrifices freely offered on the altars of our hearts, fills our whole being with the fires of Christian charity, and therefore with happiness and peace, and which spreads the conflagration of holy love to other souls, turning them from the vanities of the world to the love of GOD!

"How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be GOD, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." The question is not merely one of abstract interest, one which may be addressed to the world at large, but to no one in particular; it is one which GOD'S prophet puts to each of us to-day. Where are we each of us standing? which leader are we following? which master are we serving? Christ or the World?

Or, like the multitude on Carmel, are we trying to take an intermediate position? Are we halting, that is, limping along somewhere between the two? Not wholehearted in the interests of Christ, yet not altogether given

up to the service of the world? This is probably the condition of the majority, if we have courage and honesty enough to face the truth. But what an impossible position —for we gain the full rewards of neither, and lose the happiness of both.

That it is an impossible position none can deny; and yet how many cling to it. They cannot break from the world and give themselves wholly to Christ—it costs too much, demands too great a sacrifice. And yet they *dare* not altogether desert the banner of Christ, and give themselves unreservedly to worldliness—the end would be too awful!

But Christ tells us that "no man can serve two masters." We must make a decision, and if we obey the dictates of reason we shall not hesitate what decision to make. For, to use but one argument, the best rewards the world can give are but for *time*, and few of them endure even through this life, while the rewards of Christ's service are *eternal*.

As we read, year by year in the lessons of the Church, the dramatic story of Elijah on Mount Carmel, let us ask ourselves the prophet's question, and earnestly seek of GOD the Holy Ghost, light to enable us to answer it truly, light to see ourselves as we are. GOD grant that our answer may be, "I will no longer halt between two opinions, I will no longer waste life in attempting the impossibility of a divided allegiance, I will be alway and altogether the servant of GOD, the follower of Christ; for the Lord He is GOD, the Lord He is *my* GOD."

Sermon XC.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR BAD EXAMPLE.

(The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.)

S. MATTHEW XVIII. 7.

"Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

THIS is the sternest, the hardest, the most severe saying our merciful Lord uttered whilst He dwelt on earth. And surely it could have been no ordinary occasion, no common sin, that could have drawn from His merciful lips, that could have wrung from His loving heart, so tremendous a condemnation.

It is true, our Lord denounced woes upon other sins and other sinners. He said, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!"[1] "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"[2] "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!"[3] But when He said, "Woe unto the world because of offences!" see how He *qualifies* it, how bitterly He adds, "For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea"—better, that is, than that he should "offend one of these little ones which believe in Me."

[1] S. Matt. xi. 21. [2] S. Matt. xxiii. 13. [3] S. Matt. xxvi. 24.

How terrible a denunciation to fall from the lips of Jesus Christ, Who was so loving, so gentle, so patient! It must, indeed, have been a sin of no ordinary magnitude, a crime of the deepest dye, and of the most far-reaching effect, that could call forth the words, "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea"—not only better that he had never been born, but better that he were drowned; not only better for the world, but better for the man himself! When our Lord said of Judas, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!" He added, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born." But here He says, "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

I. But what was this sin of offences which our Lord condemns in such tremendous terms?—"Woe unto the world because of offences!" The word "offence" (*σκάνδαλον*), which occurs some fifteen times in the New Testament, originally signified the movable stick of a trap upon which the bait was put. From thence it came to mean a trap, or snare, or anything put in the way of another to cause him to stumble or fall. Hence, it came to mean a stumbling-block. In this sense it belongs to ecclesiastical Greek, and is used exclusively of spiritual stumbling-blocks, the snares and enticements of Satan, or of those who are doing Satan's work in tempting others to sin.

While carefully bearing in mind that the word "offence" may include any sort of temptation or spiritual snare, I am going to-day to confine myself to one class of stumbling-blocks, perhaps the largest and most dangerous class—those which come from bad example.

When our blessed Lord uttered this sentence, it may have been wrung from Him by the knowledge of how much evil would happen in this world as the result of bad example; how much misery, how much sorrow, how much suffering, would come into the lives of His children from the bad example, sometimes, of one man.

II. We may observe that in the paragraph which precedes our text our Lord is speaking of little children, innocent, happy children, and the words, "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea," seem to refer primarily to those who put stumbling-blocks in the way of little children, who rob them of their innocence, and therefore of their happiness.

But who would wilfully rob a child of its innocence? Who would not rather, though wicked himself, strive to protect and preserve the innocence of a child? Yes, but how many children lose their innocence, not by the wilful and deliberate action of those who are older than they, but by their bad example, perhaps their unconscious bad example. How quick a child is to learn—evil, as well as good! How quick children are to imitate what they see others do!

And so we may consider, first, the responsibility of parents. Most parents desire to bring up their children well, and to this end are careful to teach them to be truthful, and honest, and pure, and gentle, and unselfish. But of how little avail it is to teach these things as theories or principles, when the example which parents set is precisely the opposite to their teaching! How much deception in little things, including perhaps untruth and dishonesty, is practised, without any realization of its effect as an

example to children, who are quick to notice it, and who perhaps grow up, on this account, to think that truth, and honesty, and temperance, and purity, are to be held as theories, rather than practised as virtues.

We may advance a step from parents to friends, and consider the effect of unconscious example in the intimacy of friendship, beginning, perhaps, at school, or at college, beginning when we are young, the example of those whom we looked up to, and trusted, and admired, on account of their attractiveness, or brilliancy, or personal magnetism; and, because we admired them, we imitated them, and learned from them habits which have been the curse of our life here, and may, perhaps, be the ruin of our soul hereafter! Our friend had no desire to lead us into his evil habits. Perhaps they were not very bad, and we went far beyond anything that he had done in the way of sinfulness.

What a sacred thing friendship is! How many responsibilities are attached to it! One of them is the responsibility of stimulating our friend to what is noble and good. Another is that of setting him a good example; and, above all things, of carefully abstaining from ever setting him a bad example.

III. There are many men and women who are tied and bound with chains of sin, with the bonds of evil habits which they cannot break, and which destroy all that is best in their character, and rob their life of any real happiness. Probably most of these can trace the beginnings of that sin to the examples set them by someone to whom they looked up, perhaps in the sacredness of the home circle, perhaps in school or college days, perhaps the friend whom they learned first to love, and then to follow in paths of

sin. To the question, "What are these wounds in thine hands?" such can answer, in the words of the prophet Zechariah, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."[1]

How many a blasphemer has been made out of a young man, well brought up at home by fond and good parents, who, when he went out into the world, met some one whom the society in which he mixed regarded as the very pattern of an engaging and amiable fellow! At first, perhaps, he was rather shocked by his friend's language, then he got used to it, then insensibly he acquired the same evil habit of taking GOD'S Name in vain. And from that he went on to a loss of all reverence for GOD and religion.

How many young women there are whom a love of fine dress has ruined! And that love of fine dress was awakened in them entirely by the example set by those who were above them in station of life, whom they admired and imitated; and, to obtain the means of imitating them, they sacrificed their virtue and ruined their souls!

Those who are confirmed drunkards or gamblers acquired the vice gradually, and probably the beginnings of the habit could be traced to the example of others.

And all these have fallen into sin, have injured, perhaps irreparably, their character, are losing their souls, on account of someone else putting a stumbling-block in their way, not perhaps intentionally, and yet just as effectually, as if it had been put there deliberately. And our Lord teaches us in this text that such persons will be held responsible for the evil result of their example. "Woe unto the world because of offences!" because of

[1] Zech. xiii. 6.

stumbling-blocks. "Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

I was told once of a man who on his death-bed had something on his conscience which greatly distressed him. He had not been a bad man, from the world's standpoint, and it was only a boyish freak. He said to the priest who was ministering to him, "I was going across a common one day, and I saw a sign-post at the cross roads, pointing the way to two different places. The post was old and crazy, and so, for fun, I took down the arms and changed them, so as to make them point to the wrong roads. It was a foolish thing, but of late years it has continually haunted me. And now on my death-bed it greatly troubles me, to think how many a poor, weary man crossing that common I have sent on the wrong road."

My brethren, this is a parable of life. Think now, before it is too late. Do not leave it till you are on your death-bed. Think, if by your example you have ever sent any poor fellow-creature toiling across the common of this life on the wrong road, the road that leads to destruction, instead of the narrow way which leads to heaven! Think, if by any example of yours you have removed the guiding-post which would have led the man aright had you not pointed out the wrong way. And if your conscience accuse you of this, repent, earnestly, humbly, and strive to make amends, by being yourself a sign-post pointing those around you on the road to heaven.

"Woe unto the world because of offences!" God grant that this text may never apply to you. May no one

have to lay their first fault at your door. Rather, may many bless you for turning them into the right way.

There is another passage of Holy Scripture which we should humbly strive to apply to our lives. You will find it in the Epistle of S. James. They are, indeed, his last words. "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." [1]

[1] S. James v. 20.

Sermon XCI.

AHAB'S MISUSE OF RELIGION.

(The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.)

1 KINGS XXII. 8.

"And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

IN the Old Testament Lesson for to-day we have given us, with great fulness of detail, the closing scene in Ahab's checkered life. Almost one-third of the First Book of Kings is devoted to his reign. And the fulness with which the last chapter records his end may be accounted for by the desire of the writer to exhibit the justice of GOD in the retribution which at last overtook the wicked king.

We are told that "Ahab did more to provoke the Lord GOD of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."[1] What were his chief sins? They fall under two heads —those which arose out of his misuse of religion, and those which had to do with the duties of secular life. Under the first we may notice three great sins, the least of which, probably, was the continuance of the Calf worship instituted by Jeroboam; the greater ones, the introduction of the worship of Baal and Astarte, with their impure and degrading rites, and the persecution of the prophets of Jehovah, together with the practical proscription of the faith and worship ordained by GOD Himself.

[1] 1 Kings xvi. 33.

In the other class we may notice Ahab's disregard of God's Will in releasing Ben-hadad when God had delivered him into his hand. This led directly to Ahab's death; for the foe whom he had wrongly released overthrew him at Ramoth-gilead.

The other great sin, committed at the instigation of Jezebel, was the judicial murder of Naboth, in order that he might acquire possession of his vineyard.

Ahab was guilty of many other grievous offences, but these were the most prominent. In spite, however, of all his wickedness, God did not leave Ahab without many warnings, many signs of His power to punish and to reward—such as the three years' drought, Elijah's sacrifice at Carmel, the rain obtained in answer to Elijah's prayer. And even after judgment had been pronounced on Ahab when he went to take possession of Naboth's vineyard, on his repentance the punishment was postponed, partly remitted, and Ahab was forgiven. This penitence was real; for God accepted it. But fear was its motive, not love, and therefore it did not last. Besides, he had ever at his side an evil genius, a wicked woman, who never rested until she had led him back into the paths of sin.

I. But, with all his sins, Ahab had been, from the world's point of view, a successful ruler. He had built cities and a palace, so inlaid with ivory that it was called "the ivory house." Then he had twice, by God's help, defeated the Syrians. And now, after three years' peace, their growing strength and their king Ben-hadad's perfidy led him to determine upon another campaign. And he takes advantage of a visit paid him by Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to enlist his aid. Doubtless, with such an ally he felt sure of victory; for had he not, single-handed and against great odds, twice defeated the Syrians? And was not his cause a just one—to regain the important fortress of Ramoth-gilead, which by right belonged to Israel,

and the return of which had been expressly stipulated for in the covenant made between himself and Ben-hadad?

Before entering upon the war, Jehoshaphat, who was a most religious king, asks that at this point inquiry should be made of God, whether it was His Will that they should undertake the campaign. Accordingly Ahab summons four hundred prophets, and asks of them, "Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?" and obtains the unhesitating answer, "Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king."

Who are these four hundred prophets? Certainly not prophets of Jehovah; for Jehovah's prophets had been practically driven out of the land. Probably they were the priests attached to the Calf worship at Beth-el and Dan, who doubtless claimed the power of prophecy, and who were the obsequious servants of Ahab. The fact that they are not recognized as the prophets of the Lord, either by Jehoshaphat or by Micaiah, both of whom were worshippers of Jehovah, is suggested by Jehoshaphat's inquiry, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord (Jehovah) besides, that we might enquire of him?"

From this it is evident that Jehoshaphat does not regard the four hundred prophets, who had given so unanimous an answer to Ahab's inquiry, as true prophets of Jehovah. Similarly we may notice that Micaiah in narrating his vision speaks of them as Ahab's prophets, not as the prophets of Jehovah. And further we may observe, what is not brought out in our translation, that at first these prophets do not venture to use the ineffable Name Jehovah, but the Name Adonai; or, as given in the parallel passage of the Chronicles, Elohim. They say, "Go up; for the Lord (Adonai) shall deliver it into the hand of the king." Afterwards Zedekiah does use the Name of Jehovah, no doubt because Jehoshaphat had been dissatisfied with their response, and had desired that a prophet of Jehovah should be sought for and consulted.

II. The response of Ahab's prophets was unanimous. But upon what was it based? It is, perhaps, impossible for us to decide the question how far these prophets were consciously impostors, and how far they were self-deceived. They were not prophets of Jehovah, like Elijah and Micaiah, and they knew this. They were self-constituted prophets; or, at best, constituted by Ahab. They were dependents of the king, not of GOD. And so they took their cue from the king. They prophesied what Ahab wished them to prophesy. They told him to do what they knew he wished to do. They saw that Jehoshaphat was of the same mind as Ahab about going up to the battle, and that all the people were set upon it. It would, therefore, have been against their own interests not to go with the popular feeling, especially when it was so unanimous.

Perhaps, too, they were constrained by something within them to prophesy as they did—the lying spirit of which Micaiah spoke. So that they may even have believed their own prophesy. Although we must bear in mind that GOD's putting a lying spirit into their mouth may not imply more than that GOD let them have their own way, allowed them to say what they wished to say, as He did *not* allow Balaam.

There have been many impostors in all ages of the world, who have deceived the world so long that they have come to believe in their own deceptions. There are probably many such in our own day among self-constituted ministers of new religions—Spiritualists, Christian Scientists, and such like. Many of these have come to believe in their own impostures; and GOD punishes them and their dupes by allowing a lying spirit to speak through them.

At Jehoshaphat's request Micaiah was sent for, the one prophet of Jehovah opposed to Ahab's four hundred, as Elijah had been on Carmel to the same number of the prophets of Baal.

Ahab's feeling towards God's prophets is expressed in the words, "I hate him; for he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." This he says of Micaiah. To Elijah he had said, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"[1]

Such men as Ahab generally regard God's ministers as their enemies; that is, if God's ministers are true to their sacred calling. They do not repudiate all religion. Indeed, they generally strive to salve their consciences and to deceive the world by obtaining the sanction of some false religion. We see it in our own day, in the support which is given by a class of men, who can scarcely be termed "religious," to the various extravagant travesties of religion. A man of this sort likes to have his prophets, if he can be sure that they will always tell him to do what he wants to do. He knows that he can never expect any faithful priest to do this. So he regards God's ministers as his enemies, hates them, and persecutes them, so far as he has the power to do so; but prides himself on belonging to some sect.

Ahab prepares Jehoshaphat for Micaiah's prophecy by saying, he always prophesies evil concerning me; therefore we can discount what he is going to say beforehand. That Ahab, however, felt uncomfortable about Micaiah's prophecy, is evidenced by his disguising himself before he went into the battle. He determined to run as little danger as possible. But God's judgments are sure, and a chance arrow slew the king.

III. We may notice a peculiar fitness in the retribution which overtook Ahab. He had been faithless to God, Who had twice saved him from the Syrians, and had pardoned him on his expression of penitence. So it was fitting that he should experience the perfidy of Ben-hadad, whom he likewise had pardoned and restored to his kingdom.

Ahab had chosen his prophets and ministers of religion in

[1] 1 Kings xxi. 20.

defiance of God, Who had appointed others; and these prophets whom he chose deceive him, lie to him, and lead him on to his death. But even here God sends him one more warning by the mouth of Micaiah.

The Syrians who slew him at Ramoth-gilead were once his subjects when, three years before, he had conquered them.

What a suggestive lesson we have here—the sins we once conquered and had under control may revive and rise against us, and ruin us, if we are not watchful.

An unknown archer fulfils God's purpose. Naboth is avenged, according to Elijah's prophecy, even to the dogs of Samaria licking Ahab's blood, as the dogs of Jezreel did the blood of his son Joram.

The lessons taught by the death of Ahab are so many, that we must confine ourselves to one—Ahab's misuse of religion. Ahab was not a man who repudiated religion altogether. He probably spent time and money over it. He supported the prophets of Baal, of Astarte, and the priests of the Calves. But the religion he chose was the wrong religion, and Ahab had had abundant opportunities of knowing that it was wrong. He liked to have his prophets dependent on his wishes, so as to give the sanction of religion to his will. He hated a prophet who was independent, like Elijah or Micaiah, and who did his duty fearlessly by denouncing his sins, and proclaiming only God's laws.

Are there not some like Ahab now, who are loud in their denunciation of priests who make the law of God and of His Church—and not the wishes of the rich and powerful in their congregation—the rule of their ministry? Are there not some like Ahab, who choose an easy-going religion, and prefer an easy-going minister, one who will keep silent about their darling sins, and who will appreciate their patronage?

Let us learn from Ahab the folly of such misuse of religion.

Let us strive to be sure that our religion is right, and that we are sincere in our practice of it, not using it as a cloak for a sinful life, but rather as a help to real holiness.

Sermon XCII.

THE LABOURER'S REWARD.

(The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. MATTHEW XX. 13-16.

"But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"

THE parable of the labourers in the vineyard has been thought by many to present serious moral difficulties. Is it just that, either in this world or in eternity, all should receive the same reward, irrespective of length or faithfulness of service?

Then, again, is it true that all do receive the same reward? Is this consistent with such passages of Holy Scripture as these? —"One star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead."[1] "I will give unto every one of you according to your works."[2] "And they were judged every man according to their works."[3]

And finally, if both these questions be answered in the affirmative, is the grudging spirit of discontent which some of the labourers showed compatible with the love and peace of heaven? Let us attempt to give some answer to these questions.

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42. [2] Rev. ii. 23. [3] Rev. xx. 13

We must, of course, begin by considering the significance of the "penny," which all the labourers alike received. What does it represent? To help us to answer this question, we may ask another.

In its broadest sense, what is the reward which GOD promises in eternity to those who are faithful? We shall all agree in saying that the reward is life; that life is the supreme gift of GOD. As Holy Scripture teaches—"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of GOD is eternal life through Jesus Christ." [1] "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish." [2] "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." [3]

Life is GOD's great gift to man, both in this world and in the world to come. We cannot, therefore, be far wrong if we take the penny as representing this reward, promised to the Jews by a covenant of works, but given to the Christian through a covenant of grace.

I. Now, at the outset, it is quite evident that in one sense the gift is the same to all; for you cannot divide "life" into parts, either in this world or in eternity. A person either possesses life, or he does not possess it; he either lives, or he does not live.

While, however, the gift of life is the same to all, the use of the gift leads to very different results in different individuals. We see this in the natural gift of life in this world. Some men so use their life here that it is full of blessing to themselves and to others. Others employ their life here in such a way, that it is of use neither to themselves nor to any one else. And this use of the gift of natural life depends very much on whether we possess it and use it in loving dependence upon GOD, the Giver of life, or whether we try to live apart from Him, in the spirit of selfish independence.

We have a hint of this in the reply to the discontented

[1] Rom. vi. 23. [2] S. John x. 28. [3] Rev. ii. 10.

labourers: "Take that thine is, and go *thy* way." The man who claims God's gift of life apart from God, who claims to live independent of God, takes God's gift and goes *his* way, not God's way, and lives his life as he chooses.

And what is such a life worth to him?—Nothing. The value of life depends upon its being possessed in union with the Giver; if we are to make the most of it we must not take it as our own and apart from God, but we must enjoy it in dependence upon and in union with God.

What a contrast between the two sayings of our Lord—"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me," [1] and "Take that thine is, and go *thy* way."

II. Now the life of union with God in this world, for the Christian, is the sacramental life begun in Baptism, continued and nourished by every Communion, and ended in complete oneness with Christ.

But here again, both in Baptism and in the Eucharist, the gift is the same to all—in Baptism, the new birth, the incorporation into Christ, the beginning of the spiritual life—in the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Every communicant who kneels at the Altar receives precisely the same gift; but it is to each one what he makes it. All receive the same penny. Its worth depends on themselves, upon the disposition with which they come to the Holy Communion, upon the fidelity with which they use the grace therein received.

With what different dispositions do men approach the Holy Communion; some with deep penitence, with sincere humility, with real charity; and, receiving the good seed into good ground, they bring forth the fruits of that Communion a hundredfold!

Others come with their souls unprepared, beaten down, like the hard pathway in the parable of the sower, upon which the

[1] S. Matt. xvi. 24.

seed falls, but never even germinates! The seed is the same, but the ground is different.

Or perhaps they make some preparation and receive the seed with joy; but its history is that of the seed which fell upon the rocky ground. It springs up quickly; but, for lack of moisture, withers away. These souls have made some preparation, the seed does take root in their hearts and begins to show some growth; but, because they fail to supply it with the waters of grace, it speedily withers away. Such are those communicants who, after they have received the eucharistic gift, forget all about it and bring forth no fruit.

In the life of sacramental union with Christ we see, then, that the gift is the same to all, and yet how different! It is what each makes it. GOD does His part. But much depends upon man's co-operation with GOD, the faithfulness with which the individual uses the grace given.

III. There still remains for our consideration "life in eternity," the life of heaven, the supreme and final reward for those who have faithfully used the gifts of natural and supernatural life in this world.

And still we find the parable true in spite of its seeming injustice; for all who are finally saved at the day of judgment receive the same gift of eternal life, the same vision of GOD satisfying their intellects, the same love of GOD ravishing their affections and possessing their wills—the same life of GOD, the same knowledge of GOD, the same love of GOD—and yet how different! For it becomes to each what the capacity of each makes it.

How great will be the difference between the knowledge of truth revealed, in the beatific vision, to the mighty intellect of S. Paul, and the knowledge of truth possessed by some soul who, having wasted all the best part of his life in the pursuits of the world, has turned to GOD only at the eleventh hour! He

is saved. He receives the same penny, the same gift of eternal life; but how different is his capacity for enjoying it from that of the great saint whose whole life has been occupied in the interest of God; whose mind, even here on earth, was saturated with the knowledge of God; and who, by faithful use of the talent committed to him, has expanded to its utmost his capacity for drinking in God's revelation of Himself in heaven.

How different will be the love of God throughout eternity, which fills with ecstasy the soul of the Apostle S. John, from that love possessed by the sinner who turned to God with a death-bed repentance, and is just saved. He has the gift of eternal life. But how limited is his capacity for appropriating that gift in its fulness.

God's gift of life, of light, of love, in eternity will be the same to all, like the penny in the parable; and yet will differ enormously, according to the capacity of each; and that capacity will depend on faithful service in this life; not merely on length of service, but on fidelity, absolute self-surrender to God's Will, entire devotion to God's work. On this will depend the power of appropriating the rewards of heaven.

IV. There remains yet one difficulty to be considered. Is the grudging spirit of discontent, exhibited by some of the labourers, compatible with the love and peace of heaven?—Certainly not. "Take that thine is, and go thy way," cannot be said to any who have attained to life eternal. Their joy will be, not to possess, but to be possessed by God; not to go *their* way, but to be altogether conformed to God's Will; not to carry off God's gifts and enjoy them apart from God, or apart from their fellow-citizens in heaven; but to realize the oneness of the Body of Christ in the life of union with God in heaven.

The spirit of discontent belongs wholly to this world, and is

a danger against which our Lord is warning His disciples. Its existence in any soul is a sign that that soul is not right with God, that the motive of its life is wrong, that it is self-deceived in regard to its claims upon God.

The spirit of envy, jealousy, and of discontent, is absolutely impossible in the soul which really loves God. This is not merely a statement of what ought to be the results of divine love, but of what experience teaches us is always found in those who love God. No one ever came to God and tasted the sweetness of His love, no one ever knew the joys of pardon and peace, without desiring everyone else to be a sharer in that love, in those joys. There is a true saying, that no one ever came to God alone. The soul that has really found God is quite sure to go out and bring another soul to God. Envy, jealousy, discontent, belong to this world with its selfish ambitions, with its sordid covetousness. They can have no place in the kingdom of heaven.

Thus we see that the difficulties which some find in this parable are only superficial, and that these very difficulties draw attention to great principles of spiritual life which we are in danger of losing sight of. If we love God, we shall toil, not that we may get a greater reward than some one else obtains; but because we love God, and it is the joy of our life here, as it will be the joy of our life in eternity, to serve Him for love.

Sermon XCIII.

NAAMAN AND THE CAPTIVE MAID.

(The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

2 KINGS v. 2, 3.

"And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would GOD my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."

THE story of Naaman and the little captive maid is one of the most touching in the Old Testament. In preaching on this subject, the tendency, however, is to centre the attention on Naaman, and to overlook the really beautiful part of the story, the agency of the captive child in Naaman's healing. This is natural, and in a sense right, since the purpose of the history is primarily to tell us of Naaman's cure, and perhaps to set forth, through it, the direful effects of sin which leprosy typifies, and the agency by which alone both can be cured. The slave girl's relation to the story is merely incidental, and yet it is full of pathos, and most instructive.

I. No peace had been made with the Syrians after Ahab's defeat and death at Ramoth-gilead, and raids were probably frequent upon the borderland of Israel. We are told that one of the marauding bands of Syrians had carried away among the spoils a little maid, who either as part of his share of the booty, or by purchase, had passed into Naaman's possession, and had become one of his wife's attendants.

Her story reminds us of an earlier episode in Old Testament history, that of Joseph sold to the Midianites, and living as a slave in Potiphar's house. In their position and conduct they

were strikingly alike. The lot of each was indeed a sad one. To be an alien in a foreign land is hard, but how much harder when that land is at war with your own country, and your position in it is that of a captive! But it is hardest of all when you are not only a captive but a slave. Yet this was the lot both of Joseph and of the Hebrew maiden.

One thing might have lightened the burden and been a bond of sympathy between the master and slave—the interest of a common religion—but this, too, was wanting, and its absence made the loneliness more intense. There must have been no small temptation, in such a case, to accept the religion of those around, to adapt oneself to circumstances. And doubtless, in the case of the captive girl, she would have pleased her master and mistress by doing so, and very likely she displeased them by clinging to her own religion, and thus implying that their religion was not true. It may even have led at times to some persecution.

Joseph had to go through the same trial. But both of them were faithful, faithful to God; and, because they were faithful to God, they were trustworthy and faithful to those over them. So marked was Joseph's fidelity and ability, that he rose to be the head of Potiphar's house. And it does not seem unlikely, from the way in which her advice was received, that the captive maiden had gained some influence with her mistress at the Syrian court.

II. The story of the captive maid really occupies but three verses of the chapter which tells of Naaman's healing; and yet, short as it is, we may learn from it several lessons of practical value in every age.

1. The first danger to threaten one in her position would be the temptation to bitterness, to a spirit of revenge against those who held her captive, and of rebellion against God, Whose providence had permitted her hard fate. Torn from

her country, her home, and her friends, and reduced to the condition of a slave, dependent absolutely upon the will of her mistress, she manifests no such spirit. On the contrary, she takes the deepest interest in the welfare of her master, she grieves at his sad affliction.

Naaman is a great man, but he is a leper; and to a Jew, leprosy, in addition to the physical affliction, carried with it a social and religious ostracism, which made it the most dreadful of all calamities. The Jewish leper was unclean, unable to join in the religious rites of the nation, forbidden to take any part in its social life; ostracized, obliged to live alone, with the mark of God's displeasure upon him. The tender heart of the gentle girl went out in sympathy to the great warrior whose fate seemed so cruel. She almost forgot her own sorrows in his, and does the little she can towards his recovery.

2. It may not be amiss to notice at this point the spiritual application of the proverb that "It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good." The misfortune of the Hebrew maiden brought an unexpected blessing on Naaman and his house. Her presence, though involuntary, was providential, in that, through her, Naaman was not only freed from the burden which embittered his life, but received the greatest gift that man can receive—the knowledge of the true God. Not only the healing of Naaman's body, not only the restoration of Naaman's honour, was bestowed, but the healing of his soul, the revelation to him of Israel's God, of Jehovah's mercy and power.

We see this exemplified so often in the history both of nations and of individuals, that we may consider it a law of God's providence, that, through one man's misfortune, another man is helped to some great benefit. S. Paul's experience at Philippi was bitter enough, when they laid many stripes upon him and upon his companion Silas, and made their feet fast in the stocks. Yet it was this imprisonment which brought

the Gospel of salvation to the Philippian jailor and his household.

And the capture of the Jewish slave girl is by no means the only instance in the records of the Church in which a captive has brought salvation to her master's house. How often in the days of the great Roman Empire was this history repeated, and slaves who were Christians converted their mistresses, and won to the Church some of the noblest families in Rome. S. Paul himself, in his imprisonment at Rome, though chained to a soldier, preached the Gospel, so that the Good Tidings were carried all through Cæsar's household.

We should strive to use our misfortunes in this spirit, to make them an opportunity of helping to a knowledge of God those with whom we should never have been brought in contact, but for the trouble or affliction which befel us.

3. But the most prominent feature in the slave-girl's character is her fidelity to her religious bringing-up. Like Joseph, she remembered God in her time of adversity; and, though surrounded by those who worshipped false gods, she was unswerving in her allegiance to her early training. She must have been well taught as a child, not only the doctrines of her faith, but the importance of being true to her Church.

How many young people in our days go away from home, after having learned something of the Church's teaching, after having received, perhaps, the Church's Sacraments, after Confirmation and Communion; and yet, when they are thrown amongst those of another faith, how soon they abandon their religious duties, or allow themselves to be persuaded to accept some other religion!

Some give up religion altogether. At first, perhaps, prayers are not said, and the reading of the Bible is neglected, because the one who shares his room does not say his prayers or read his Bible. Then Church-going is given up, because companions

do not go to Church, and suggest some pleasanter way of spending Sunday.

In the case of the captive maid, worldly policy or expediency might have led her to adopt the religion of her mistress. But she would not sacrifice GOD'S favour for man's, and with her, religion was a matter of principle, not merely a habit to be laid aside when inconvenient. No religious surroundings could have been more uncongenial than those which she found in the Syrian court. And yet she is not only true to her own faith, but becomes a missionary, and eventually is the means of bringing one of the greatest in the land to a knowledge of the true GOD. The result of her work, we may be sure, did not stop with the conversion of Naaman; doubtless it led to his whole family, and many among the Syrians, giving up their idolatry, and worshipping the GOD of Israel.

When young men or young women go out into the world to earn their living, and their lot is thrown among uncongenial religious surroundings, not only have they the duty of keeping up their own religious life, of keeping the light burning in their own soul, of keeping themselves pure and unspotted from the world; but in most cases an immense opportunity is given them of helping others, of helping those of their companions and fellow-workers, who have not had their own religious advantages, an opportunity of speaking a word in season; or, even better, of setting an example of consistent Christian life, of obedience to the rules of the Church, which in the end is almost sure to win souls to Christ. Many a young girl going out to service has an opportunity something like that of the Jewish captive, of sowing seed which may bring forth great fruit, to the honour of GOD, and to the happiness of others.

4. Then we must not fail to notice her youth and the extremely humble position she occupies. The former is implied in the description, "a little maid"; the latter, in the fact that

she was a captive slave-girl. Who could occupy a more humble position in life? And yet she becomes a missionary for her Church, and brings a blessing to the great in the land. And how did she accomplish it?—Simply by telling of the powers and privileges of her Church. Her master's condition was sad indeed, and, from the world's point of view, hopeless; for leprosy was rarely cured by natural means. But she could tell of a power which was supernatural, of means of which the world knew nothing. She could tell that there was a prophet in Samaria who could recover Naaman of his leprosy, not through any power of his own, but through the power bestowed upon him by GOD.

It is not so much by controversial arguments in regard to the doctrines of the Church, as by witnessing to our own personal experience of its powers, that sinners are won to GOD. It is not by saying, "I have heard this," but by saying, "I know by my own experience the wonderful things which grace can accomplish," that we lead men and women in penitence to the feet of Christ.

But the secret of her goodness, and faithfulness, and power, was that she really *believed* in her religion. She had a strong living faith, not merely a set of theological opinions. She believed GOD could heal Naaman; she believed her Church, through its prophet, could help her master; and so the advice she gave, the prayer she made, had the ring of conviction in it. She was convinced herself, and so she convinced her master, and led him to take much trouble, that he might use the means of which she told him, and obtain the blessing which she promised.

Sermon XCIV.

CHRIST'S LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM.

(The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. MATTHEW XXIII. 37.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

OUR Lord's lamentation over Jerusalem contains, perhaps, the most pathetic words He ever uttered; words which reveal to us not only the depth of His own love, but certain characteristics of His perfect Humanity, which teach us how truly He was one with us in all that pertains to our nature, sin only excepted. For in these words our Lord exhibits that strange virtue of patriotism which burns in almost every soul. I call it a strange virtue, because it is not quite easy to see why every man should love, with such passionate devotion, his own country, even when that country is insignificant, and perhaps unattractive. Yet we recognize the same virtue in the citizen of some poor and unimportant country, barren alike of natural resources and of the gifts of civilization, as we find in the citizen of one of the great world powers.

Patriotism is innate in the human nature. And, as our Lord was true Man, we find in His lament over Jerusalem a splendid outburst of patriotism. He loved the city, which was at once His nation's capital and its pride. He had worked for that city, He was ready to die for it; and His sorrow was only

that His life's work and His death would be powerless to save it from its doom.

I. What city had received more manifest tokens of God's love, had enjoyed greater privileges than Jerusalem? It had risen to greatness in David's time, when he laid, not only the foundation of its material prosperity, but also of its religious supremacy over the world. The Temple was there, the place of all others in this wide world that God had chosen for His abiding Presence—to put His Name there.

And then, how many visitations had God in His mercy sent that city—hundreds of prophets raised up in times of emergency to warn the people of their danger, to reveal to them the means by which they might escape it—a city was indeed favoured by God which had had such citizens as Isaiah and Jeremiah, not to speak of the noble army of prophets, all of whom were persecuted, many of whom were slain!

And even when its people disregarded the warnings of the prophets, and were beleaguered by their enemies, when they turned to God with penitence, again and again He heard them and delivered them from their foes.

When the great destruction, so long foretold, came upon Jerusalem as the result of her many crimes, of her years of rebellion, and Nebuchadnezzar carried off the people to Babylon, even then God had mercy and brought them back, and enabled them to rebuild the city, and raised them up once more to something of national greatness—nay, more, to something of cosmopolitan influence; for in all the chief cities of the empire the colonies of the Jews were regarded with respect, and their religious life influenced the world.

Yet they were ever ungrateful and rebellious. They were God's vineyard, planted in a very fruitful hill, planted with the choicest vine—the knowledge of the true God. Yet, how did the husbandmen treat His servants when they came for the

fruits of the vineyard?—They "beat one, and killed another, and stoned another."[1] As our Lord says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee."

"And last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him."[2]

"How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." In our Lord's ministry, how often He strove to save Jerusalem from her doom! For, in those visits to Jerusalem which are recorded in the Gospels, He probably taught many times in the streets of the city. In the words of His lamentation He not only exhibits the virtue of patriotism, but that other strange love which is even more deeply implanted in our race —the maternal instinct, the love of a mother for her child.

"As a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." When some foe is at hand, the feeble bird, without weapons of defence, inspired with the courage which at other times is unknown to her, will fly at any enemy which approaches her chickens, and lay down her life in their defence; the maternal instinct is so touchingly and heroically displayed in a bird otherwise weak and foolish.

And this image our Lord transfers to Himself to describe His love for Jerusalem. He laments over her, not only as a patriot, sorrowing over the ruin of His country, but as a mother weeping over the loss of her children.

II. And what was the cause of the rejection of His loving offers? "How often would I have gathered thy children together, . . . and ye would not!" Here our Lord traces the

[1] S. Matt. xxi. 35. [2] S. Matt. xxi. 37-39.

trouble to its origin, and points out the seat of the disease. It is in the will—"and ye *would* not!" The will, the sovereign power of the soul, was perverted, was turned away from GOD.

There are two prime sources of sin in man—the intellect and the will. I do not forget the affections; but they are not sources to the same extent, since they can be, and ought to be, controlled by the reason and the will. But the intellect and the will are in themselves sources of sin. For all sin can be ultimately traced back, either to error in the intellect, or to perversion in the will.

On Palm Sunday, when our Lord entered the city He wept over it, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; *because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*"[1] Here He traces the trouble to the intellect—"Thou *knewest* not the time of thy visitation."

These two powers of the soul—the intellect and the will—are intimately associated; but the more important is the will; for it is useless to know what is right, unless we mean and *will* to do what is right. Indeed, to *know* is only our condemnation, unless we will to *do*. This our Lord points out when He says, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."[2] There is no happiness in knowledge apart from action; no joy in knowing what is right, if we do what is wrong. Knowledge not only increases our responsibility, but deprives us of the excuse of ignorance in our wrong-doing.

[1] S. Luke xix. 41-44. [2] S. John xiii. 17.

But some may say, How can we know what is right? There are so many teachers, even in Christianity, claiming to teach the truth, and yet contradicting one another. How are we to know what is true; how are we to tell what is right?

Our blessed Lord shows us that even in this case the will is of more importance than the intellect; for He says, "If any man will do His Will," (that is, GOD'S Will) "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of GOD, or whether I speak of Myself." [1]

Here we have a promise that, if the will is turned to GOD, earnestly desirous of doing His Will, GOD will give light, and the intellect shall be saved from error. We shall know of any doctrine, whether it be of GOD, or not.

But in the case of Jerusalem there was both error of intellect and perversion of will. Probably the error of intellect—that they knew not the time of their visitation—was the result of the perversion of will. They would not hear Christ's message; they would not listen to His teaching; they would not let Him save them. Their will was absolutely turned away from GOD, and so their intellect was darkened; they did not know the doctrine, that it was of GOD; they did not recognize the time of their visitation, that it was their last opportunity; for these words of our Lord were the last He uttered over the city He loved so well.

Thus ends His public teaching; since in the first verse of the next chapter we read that, "Jesus went out, and departed from the Temple: and His disciples came to Him. . . . And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately."

The next two chapters are the record of His private teaching to His disciples. He never taught again in Jerusalem.

[1] S. John vii. 17.

III. Is not Jerusalem the type of many a soul, in its privileges, in its opportunities, in its rejection of God's love? What has God not done for us, in giving us a knowledge of Him and of His revelation; in taking up His abode in us, through baptism; in delivering us again and again from our enemies by the help of His grace; in raising us, after falls into deadly sin through the gift of penitence; in giving us abundant opportunities of knowing Him, of loving Him, and of serving Him? And yet, can He not say of some of us, How often would I have gathered thee under My wings, and ye would not!

Let us meditate upon our Lord's love for Jerusalem; His touching lament over her rejection of that love; His clear warning in regard to her doom, and the way in which He traces it to the twofold cause, perversion of the will—"ye would not"—and error in the intellect—"thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

And then let us examine ourselves, our own souls, and see how far this applies to us; and let us so turn our wills to God in penitence, that He may save us, that He may gather us under the wings of His Cross, that He may protect us there from all our foes. and receive us at last into the kingdom of His love.

Sermon XCV.

THE LAW OF RETRIBUTION.

(The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

2 KINGS IX. 25, 26.

"Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the Lord laid this burden upon him; surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the Lord; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the Lord. Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of the Lord."

THE history of Ahab and his family not only affords us an example of unusual wickedness, but also brings before us, in a striking, not to say startling, manner, the law of Retribution, that wickedness never goes unpunished. It is well for us to be reminded of this, because there is no little danger in our times either of forgetting it, or of practically denying it. "I myself have seen the ungodly in great power, and flourishing like a green bay-tree,"[1] is what the Psalmist says. And many a man, in thought, if not in words, has repeated the complaint; but has not gone on, as the Psalmist does, to add, "I went by, and lo, he was gone: I sought him, but his place could nowhere be found."

The ungodly do flourish in this world, and obtain great power, to the great perplexity of many; alas, perhaps, with some of us, to the loss of faith in the justice of GOD! But the antidote for this is to reflect upon the law of Retribution—"The unrighteous shall be punished: as for the seed of the ungodly, it shall be rooted out." "Fret not thyself because of the

[1] Psalm xxxvii. 36.

ungodly: neither be thou envious against the evil doers. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and be withered even as the green herb." [1]

I. This law of Retribution—that sin does not go unpunished—is not merely an arbitrary revelation; but, like all the laws of God's moral government, it is a necessary moral result. It cannot be otherwise.

To disbelieve in Retribution involves a disbelief in God as a Moral Being. For if God is not merely the Creator, but the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, He must in His rule, manifest justice, that is, if He be Omnipotent. What should we say of an earthly ruler or government which allowed its laws to be broken with impunity? We should say, either that it was too weak to be able to enforce them by punishment, or too corrupt to care to do so. But God is Omnipotent, and is Just. Therefore, Retribution is as certain as God's own Being.

Moreover, God Himself, Who is the Truth, has declared again and again, that all unforgiven sin shall be punished; for we read in Holy Scripture, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, *and that will by no means clear the guilty;* visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." [2] "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works." [3] "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." [4]

II. But this is not only a dogma of revelation; it is one of the innate beliefs of human nature, witnessed to by the intuitions of the race; for there are certain notions, practically universal

[1] Psalm xxxvii. 29; 1, 2. [2] Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7. [3] S. Matt. xvi. 27. [4] Rom. ii. 8, 9.

in man, which have their basis in this law of Retribution; such, for instance, as the sense of responsibility. If you ask of any one, Are you a responsible being? he would reply, Certainly; all men are responsible beings if they are in possession of reason.

But if we are responsible, we must be responsible to some one. And though men may challenge the statement, yet, as has often been shown, deep down in human consciousness is the belief in a Day of judgment; the sense of responsibility connotes this. There must be a time and a place where our responsibility will be discharged, where our account will be rendered to God, to Whom ultimately, as our Creator and Sovereign Lord, we are responsible. The feelings of remorse, the accusations of conscience, are the beginnings of our Retribution here. But sooner or later, either here or hereafter, but always within the sphere of "time," there will be a day of Retribution.

A common error on the part of many is to demand that Retribution shall always take place in this life. For many obvious reasons this is impossible. But it will always take place in "time," that is, before we pass beyond the sphere of "time." With some unrepentant sinners, Retribution overtakes them in this life; with others, in the life beyond; but no one will escape longer than the Day of judgment. To point, as many do, to notorious cases of the ungodly, whose prosperity lasts throughout life, is only to show that in some cases punishment is delayed, not that the sinner ultimately escapes it.

There are, however, many instances of the law of Retribution being manifested in this life, and these are largely for the sake of others, chiefly as an example or warning, and as a proof that God does punish. They do not occur because the punishment that happens in this life is more severe than that which awaits the wicked in the life to come.

III. In the first lesson of this morning's service we have

a very striking instance of GOD'S punishment overtaking a guilty family in this world. Two Sundays ago this law was exhibited in the death of Ahab, to which I called your attention. To-day it is even more strikingly manifested in the punishment of Jezebel his wife, and of Joram, in accordance with the prophecy of Elijah, to which Jehu, who heard it, bears witness. Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, was not only his companion in sin, but his evil genius; the instigator, both of the murder of Naboth, and of the introduction of the worship of Baal and Astarte, which, by her persuasion was brought into Israel.

Joram, too, was not merely punished for his father's sins, but for following in his father's footsteps of sin. Doubtless in his lifetime he had been a sharer in the evil deeds of Ahab, but we are distinctly told that after he came to the throne, and therefore assumed full responsibility for his actions, "he wrought evil in the sight of the Lord; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made. Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom." [1]

There is, therefore, no question about Joram suffering only for the sins of his father; he suffered also for his own sins. He had the frightful warning of his father's death, and it seems to have led him to give up the worship of Baal; but it did *not* lead him to serve Jehovah. He still retained the worship of the Calves in Israel, and "wrought evil in the sight of the Lord."

An avenger is raised up, the ferocious Jehu, an avenger "par excellence," and GOD'S instrument in his vengeance, though he far exceeded his instructions by cruelty and treachery.

The retribution is complete in all its details. In the very spot where Naboth's blood had been licked by the dogs, retri-

[1] 2 Kings iii. 2, 3.

bution overtakes Joram. He sees Jehu approaching, and goes out in his chariot to meet him. And just at the spot where his father's sin had been committed, he meets the avenger,[1] and, all unprepared, finds a swift death. Cast into the field of Naboth, by Jehu's command, the dogs are allowed to lick his blood.[2]

Then the avenger passed on to deal with Jezebel. She heard of his approach, and painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out of the window. Some have thought she did this in the hope of captivating Jehu by her charms, as the Egyptian Queen Cleopatra, when she was at least forty years of age, afterwards enslaved Mark Antony, and even hoped for similar success with the Cæsar himself.

However this may be, Jehu quickly does his work. Calling upon some of the eunuchs who were with her in the house, to help him, he ordered her to be thrown from the window, and trod her under his horses' feet, and then sat down to eat. And when they went to bury her, the dogs had done their work, and had left of her body nothing but the skull, the feet, and the palms of the hands; the skull representing the mind with which she plotted her deeds of evil; and the hands and feet, the members with which she had executed them. These even the dogs would not touch.

The death of Ahab and of Jezebel is one of the instances in history of what is called "poetic justice," where the punishment exactly fits the offence. There are others in Roman history—Marius, who had introduced the awful "proscription" lists, is himself proscribed; Napoleon I., who had dethroned kings, is himself dethroned; Robespierre and Danton, who had first fed the guillotine, themselves die by the guillotine; and in English history, Titus Oates, the inventor of bogus plots, is himself the victim of an untrue accusation.

[1] *Cf.* 2 Kings ix. 21. [2] *Cf.* 1 Kings xxi. 24, 29.

The law of Retribution never fails. Sin that is repented of may be forgiven; but unrepented sin must always be punished, either here or hereafter. There is no repentance after death, though there will be retribution after death; hence the importance of repentance now. Every Sunday we are reminded—every day, indeed, if we say the Daily Matins—that "the Lord is our God," that "we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand," that to-day He is ready to forgive us. "To-day, if ye will hear His Voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness."[1]

Sermon XCVI.

THE FOOLISH VIRGINS.

(The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. Matthew xxv. 8.

"Our lamps are going out."

HOW wonderful is the might of a great cry to stir the soul! How great is the power of a few words to raise conflicting emotions in the breast! How often a multitude of men is swayed and influenced by a battle cry, like "Dieu et mon droit"; a patriotic shout, like "God save the King"; a cry of persecution, such as "Crucify Him, crucify Him," or "Christianos ad leones."

In the parable of the ten virgins we have two such cries; the one expressing hope and joy; the other consternation and despair. These two cries are, "Behold, the Bridegroom

[1] Psalm xcv. 8.

cometh"; and "Our lamps are going out"; this last a cry uttered on the threshold of eternal darkness by those who were about to enter upon endless night!

There is something wonderfully dramatic in this parable, which was spoken on the Mount of Olives on the Tuesday night in Holy Week. It was almost the last of our Lord's utterances. Like the parable of the talents, it was not addressed to the careless multitude, but to the chosen twelve. It is not a warning to the godless, but to those who profess to be waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and yet who are self-deceived in regard to their spiritual state.

The parable divides itself into two scenes:

I. The going forth to meet the bridegroom, or the preparation for Christ's advent.

II. And His actual coming.

I. The preparation. All start equally well, with the same end and object in view—to meet the Bridegroom; and the same means for attaining it. All are virgins, all companions of the bride, all furnished with brightly burning lamps.

The going forth to meet the Bridegroom may be taken of the decisive act by which we break with the world and enter Christ's Church, there to await His coming. The lamps represent ourselves, the earthen vessels in which the light was put at Baptism. The oil of grace, by which the light may be kept burning, is obtained through prayer and sacraments. Our work is to keep the light burning in us until Christ, our Bridegroom, comes to call us to Himself.

The difference between the wise and foolish virgins was that the latter made no provision for a long period of waiting—did not sufficiently recognize the difficulties of final perseverance.

The parable is a warning, not to the godless sinner, not to the careless worldling, but to that large class of religious people who once were full of zeal, who once clearly recognized

Christ's claim upon them, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom, breaking with sin and worldliness, setting in order the affairs of their souls, trimming and cleansing their lamps by penitence, and realizing that the one supreme purpose of life was to prepare for Christ's coming, in the hour of death, and at the day of judgment.

But how many of these who started well on their heavenly course have grown cold in the love of God, careless in the service of God. By God's mercy, they have been preserved from any very serious sin. Their life, perhaps, has not been one of strong temptation. But they have lost their first love; their former zeal has died out; and, while the light is still burning within them, it is burning but feebly, and they are self-deceived about their condition. They think that they are as they were at the beginning of their spiritual life, and do not realize how much they have deteriorated. They keep up the outward duties of religion: they go to Church; perhaps they read their Bibles; occasionally they make their Communions.

But all is so different! The love is not there; the light burns but dimly. And yet they do not realize it; they are not alarmed; they think that all is right and well with them. They would be indignant if any one doubted that they were still among those who were waiting for the coming of the Lord, among those who still look for heaven as the object of their heart's desire. These are a striking contrast to the servant of whom we read a few verses before, who said in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming"; and so took advantage of the period of delay to live an evil life. He, in his thoughts, put off the coming of Christ so far, that he did not begin to prepare for it. The foolish virgins, on the other hand, expect the Bridegroom so soon that they do not make provision for the period of long waiting. They took no oil in vessels, with which to replenish their lamps from time to time.

This is the great lesson of the parable; that it is not enough to start well with real penitence for the past, with glorious hopes for the future, unless we realize the length of the journey, and prepare ourselves to persevere to the end.

II. The coming of the Bridegroom. At midnight there was a cry made, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him"—a cry which ought to have filled every heart with joy. The long period of waiting was over, the long-wished-for salvation was at hand.

All the virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And then as they turned up the wick that the lamp might burn more brightly, the foolish virgins made a discovery which filled them with horror, and caused them to cry out, "Our lamps are going out."

It was not that the lamps had *gone* out, as our translation implies. The verb is in the present tense, and the marginal reading is correct—"Our lamps are going out." As the wick is turned up, and a greater demand, therefore, made upon the oil, the condition of affairs is discovered; the flame flickers and smoulders, and threatens to go out. This represents the last self-examination, the preparation for meeting the Bridegroom. The expiring flame reveals the fact that the oil is exhausted; and their cry tells of the anguish of despair.

Their first thought is to turn to their wiser sisters: "Give us of your oil." But they answer, "Nay; lest there be not enough for us and you." This reminds us of individual responsibility. The wife cannot save her husband; the mother cannot save her child. The saint has grace for his own soul, but not to bestow on others.

"Go ye to them that sell, and buy for yourselves," is the advice given by the wise virgins; good advice, but, alas, it is too late! "Go to them that sell" may be taken of the priests of the Church, whose work it is to dispense grace, through the

sacraments, to all alike who come. We may see here a death-bed preparation. The priest is hurriedly sent for; a death-bed confession and communion is made; but the right dispositions are wanting. It is fear, not love, which is the motive of that penitence, of that last Communion. The door is closed, the door of opportunities, which was so long wide open; the door of grace, of sacraments, which were so long neglected, because they were not deemed absolutely necessary.

The foolish virgins came again, having obtained the outward signs of the sacraments, but without the dispositions which would have enabled them to appropriate their inward grace, and they found the door shut, and knocked, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But the door was shut for ever, and they were left in the outer darkness!

And what had been their sin?—Nothing which the world recognizes as wrong; simply the neglect of religious duties. Once their soul had been in a state of grace, their hearts burning with the love of God; their faces set heavenward; their lamps brightly burning. But the long, weary years of waiting had told upon them; they had grown lax and lukewarm; they had used up the grace which once they possessed; and, just when they needed it most, they found it was exhausted.

What is the lesson? It is a lesson, surely, to religious people, to be watchful to keep up their religious life; to *frequent* the sacraments—not to use them only occasionally, but to use them as they would if they knew that Christ was coming immediately.

What would you do if you heard the cry now, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him"? What preparation would you wish to make? Make it now. And, having made it, keep yourself always prepared, always in a state of grace, that, when the Bridegroom does come, you may be among the wise virgins who go out with joy to meet Him.

Sermon XCVII.

HEZEKIAH'S TRUST IN GOD.

(The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

2 KINGS XVIII. 5.

"He trusted in the Lord GOD of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him."

OF all the kings of Judah, only three were perfect in GOD's sight, David, Hezekiah, and Josiah. For the Book of Ecclesiasticus tells us, all except these three were defective; "for they forsook the law of the Most High, even the kings of Judah failed."[1] And the virtue in Hezekiah which is specially singled out for commendation in Holy Scripture is the virtue of trust in GOD.

Hezekiah trusted GOD throughout his life, and never trusted Him in vain. But on one supreme occasion, when the most tremendous danger threatened him and his kingdom, when there was indeed no hope in man, he exhibited this trust in GOD by an action so sublime, that it is for all time, and for all people, one of the greatest examples of faith in GOD.

We have unusually abundant material out of which to construct Hezekiah's biography—the history of his reign in the Second Book of Kings, a second record in the Second Book of Chronicles, and further particulars in parts of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. And the accuracy of these is practically substantiated by the contemporary annals of the Assyrian King Sennacherib.

I. Hezekiah was the son of a weak and wicked father, Ahaz; one so degraded, that he caused his own sons to pass through

[1] Ecclus. xlix. 4.

the fire to Moloch. However, immediately on succeeding to the throne, Hezekiah commenced a great reformation, which, though interrupted by the reigns of Manasseh and Amon, was carried to its completion by his great-grand-son Josiah. His first act was to purge the Temple, to repair it, and to reopen it with splendid sacrifices and perfect ceremonial. For the religion of Jehovah had been neglected and the Temple despoiled during the careless and idolatrous reign of his father Ahaz.

In doing this he succeeded in arousing the people to a revival of the old theocratic spirit, which was shown in the destruction of the "high places" which had been profaned by the worship of images and asherahs. He even ventured on the destruction of a brazen serpent, said to have been the one made by Moses in the wilderness, because the people offered idolatrous worship to it. And then, somewhat later in his reign, he arranged for a great celebration of the Passover, extending over fourteen days, to which he invited not only his own subjects, but all Israel.[1] To encourage him in his reform, and to help him in his spiritual life, he had one of the noblest men which the Hebrew nation ever produced, the Prophet Isaiah.

II. But he found his country in terrible political difficulties, the result of the neglect of the law and worship of Jehovah, and the weakness of his father Ahaz in meeting foreign invasions; for Ahaz had allowed Jerusalem to become tributary to the kingdom of Assyria, and from this fact most of Hezekiah's troubles took their rise. This vassalage Hezekiah threw off, refusing any longer to serve the king of Assyria. But some years later, after Samaria had fallen, and the people of the kingdom of Israel had been carried away captive; when Sennacherib, king of Assyria, advanced against Judah, Hezekiah weakened in his purpose, and sent to Lachish, which

[1] 2 Chron. xxx. 1.

Sennacherib was then besieging, tendering his submission, saying, "I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear."

The tribute or fine laid upon Hezekiah by the king of Assyria was so enormous, no less than three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold, that, in order to pay it, Hezekiah took all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord and in the treasures of the king's house; and even cut the gold from the doors of the Temple of the Lord, and from the pillars, which gold he himself, at the time of the restoration of the temple, had placed there.

This was the one weak act of his reign, the attempt to buy off his enemy; and it was also a wrong act; for he used for this purpose treasure which had been dedicated to God. It was quite useless; for almost immediately after Sennacherib had received the payment he broke his faith with Hezekiah, first sending three of his generals to summon the city to surrender, and afterwards marching against it with an enormous army. I think we may be quite sure that in this Hezekiah did not follow the counsel of Isaiah, but rather leaned on the policy of his worldly statesmen and counsellors.

How foolish it is to buy off a threatening foe to purchase peace! In the history of nations, a purchased peace seldom lasts. He who has once been successful in extorting money by threats is quite sure to be tempted to repeat the process.

And this is so, not only in the history of nations, but also in that of individuals. How often an unscrupulous individual by some means discovers a secret belonging to another, perhaps a sinful secret, and proceeds to trade upon it, to ask how much his victim will give to purchase his silence. And then, if once this blackmail is submitted to, all peace in life is gone. The first bribe only whets the appetite of the unscrupulous man, and he demands another and another. True wisdom consists

in standing firm at the first, be the consequences never so unpleasant. It is best for us to pay the penalty of sin at once, than to compound with an enemy to delay the day of reckoning.

III. It was not long before the king of Assyria sent Tartan, and Rabsaris, and Rab-shakeh, with an insulting message—not so much to the king, as to the people of Jerusalem. The message was reported to the king; and when Hezekiah heard it, "he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord."[1] And he sent to Isaiah the Prophet, and Isaiah sent back God's message of comfort, "Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land."[2] Then came an insulting letter from Sennacherib himself, a letter in which he mocked Hezekiah's trust in God.

Here followed Hezekiah's supreme act of faith. Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord, and spread the letter before the Lord, and prayed to God for help. His prayer was heard; for that night the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand. And Sennacherib departed, and returned to Nineveh, and was murdered by his own sons in the house of his false god.

It would be almost impossible to exaggerate the danger in which Hezekiah found himself. He had stripped his kingdom of its resources to buy off Sennacherib; and had, therefore, no money left for war. And the boast of Sennacherib was true, that he had warred against and had overcome nation after nation, king after king. None had been able to stand before him,

[1] 2 Kings xix. 1. [2] 2 Kings xix. 6, 7.

except Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia. The situation was critical. The army was within ten miles of Jerusalem, at Libnah, an army of one hundred and eighty-five thousand men. And no human aid could possibly save the kingdom.

In this hour of peril Hezekiah throws himself upon the mercy of God, goes into God's house, and spreads the insulting letter before Him, praying for God's help, and expressing his absolute trust in God's power, even then, to deliver the kingdom from the overwhelming forces of Assyria. Hezekiah's trust is not misplaced. God sends His angel, probably by means of some pestilence, to destroy the army of invaders; and their king, almost alone, escapes back to Nineveh, there to meet his death at the hands of his own sons.

IV. Surely, here, we have a great lesson. We are taught how to act in time of trouble. Hezekiah did not deceive himself about the extent of the danger. He recognizes it; he admits the truth of the boasted prowess of Sennacherib, and goes to God in penitence.

1. This is the first lesson that Hezekiah teaches us. Though the particular trouble by which we are afflicted may not be itself traceable to any definite sin which we have committed; yet we deserve punishment for so many sins that have gone unpunished, that we should meet all trouble in the spirit of penitence, and recognize it as the due reward of our deeds. The spirit of penitence, not the spirit of rebellion, is the spirit in which we should meet the great afflictions and dangers of our life.

2. Then, too, Hezekiah realized his own weakness—that, apart from God, he could not possibly meet the danger which threatened him. And he threw himself entirely upon God's mercy, and trusted with all his heart to God's help. How often God is not able to help us in our necessities, because our faith is so weak; because, while we ask for His aid, we have

so little belief that He will really help us, and look around to find some earthly weapon with which to meet our difficulty.

Hezekiah, then, teaches us that, if GOD is to help us, we must trust Him. How perfect was his trust! He believed that GOD *could* save to the uttermost, because He was omnipotent; that GOD *would* save, because He loved His people, and also for His own honour's sake—"Now therefore, O Lord our GOD, I beseech Thee, save Thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art the Lord GOD, even Thou only." [1]

So in the Litany our Church teaches us to pray, "O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for Thy Name's sake"; "O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for Thine honour."

3. Hezekiah not only trusted GOD, but he used the means which were at his disposal. He did not seek mere human weapons, but spiritual—the weapon of prayer. He relied on prayer, and spread the letter before GOD.

Some are driven to prayer by great troubles. But how selfish prayer is in such cases! How much more efficacious would their prayers then be, if they had habitually taken all things to GOD in prayer. Hezekiah had always been a man of prayer, always zealous in GOD'S service, frequent in his attendance in the temple worship.

4. Then, lastly, Hezekiah in his troubles sent to GOD'S Prophet Isaiah, and took his advice. He was a layman and a king, and yet he sought and followed the counsel of GOD'S Prophet. Would that more of us now were like him. Then would GOD'S power be manifested in His Church, to His own glory, and to our great comfort and salvation.

[1] 2 Kings xix. 19.

Sermon XCVIII.

THE GRADUAL GROWTH OF GRACE.

(The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. MARK IV. 26-30.

"And He said, So is the kingdom of GOD, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

WHILE each of the writers of the books of the Bible was inspired to deliver GOD'S message to us, that inspiration did not destroy the individual characteristics of the writer, but left room for their exercise; so that each contributes certain aspects of the truth as apprehended through his own character and personal experience.

S. Paul dwells most upon the wonders of GOD'S grace. And we can see at once that this aspect of revelation corresponds not only with the experience of his own personal life from his conversion to the end of his ministry, but with what he saw of the working of grace in his converts.

S. John exhibits most the work of divine love, not only *for* man, but *in* man. And this we should expect from his own character, which has won for him the title of the Apostle of Love.

I. In considering the parable of the seed growing secretly, which is recorded only in S. Mark's Gospel, can we not discover some traces of personal experience? There are three sections of this Gospel (containing two miracles and one parable), which are peculiar to S. Mark. The miracles are, the

healing of the deaf man with an impediment in his speech, in the seventh chapter; and the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida, in the eighth chapter. The parable is the one I have proposed for your consideration to-day—that of the seed growing secretly.

Surely it is in this part of S. Mark's Gospel which is peculiarly his own that we should expect to find that aspect of truth which most fully represented his own experience, or appealed most directly to his own temperament and character. If, therefore, we examine these three sections, can we find any truth common to each?

I think, without doubt, that we can; and that this truth is the setting forth of the gradual character of the working of grace in the soul. This is most clearly expressed in the parable, in the words, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." But it is also to be traced in the details of the two miracles of healing.

Our Lord's works of healing were generally accomplished in a moment, by a word, or touch; as, for instance, in the cases of S. Peter's mother-in-law, the demoniacs, the sick of the palsy, the man with the dropsy, the man with a withered hand, the courtier's son, the woman with the spirit of infirmity, the woman with the issue of blood, the impotent man at Bethesda, and many others. But in the only two miracles recorded by S. Mark we observe distinct stages in the process of healing.

In the healing of the deaf man at Décapolis we may trace no less than six steps. We are told:

1. That our Lord took him aside from the multitude.
2. That He put His fingers in his ears.
3. That He spit and touched his tongue.
4. That He looked up to heaven.
5. That He sighed.
6. That He saith, "Ephphatha," be opened.

In the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida we find four steps:

1. That He took him by the hand and led him out of the town.
2. That He spit on his eyes.
3. That He put His hands upon him. This ended the first part of the treatment, and resulted in the partial recovery of sight; for, when asked by our Lord if he saw ought, "he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking."
4. After this, Christ "put His hands upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly."

There can be no question but that these two miracles form a great contrast to others, in that the cure was gradual and exhibited distinct stages; and further, that the lesson they teach is the same as that inculcated by the parable—the lesson of gradual growth, or the gradual working of the forces of grace.

May we not, in what we know of S. Mark's own character and life, see the reason why he dwelt upon this aspect of truth?

We find S. Mark starting with S. Paul and his uncle S. Barnabas on the first missionary journey, but leaving them at Perga. So inexcusable does S. Paul consider this conduct, that he refused to try S. Mark again and to take him on the second journey. And so persistent was he in his refusal that S. Paul and S. Barnabas parted on these grounds.

Afterwards, at the end of his life, we find S. Paul writing to S. Timothy, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry."[1]

We therefore learn that S. Mark was rehabilitated in the

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 11.

opinion of S. Paul; and, indeed, tradition tells us that he had done good service with S. Peter, to whom he had attached himself; and further, that his Gospel was really an account of the preaching of S. Peter, as S. Luke's was of the preaching of S. Paul.

In his own spiritual experience, then, S. Mark had an opportunity of recognizing the gradual working of grace in the soul; and in what he heard of his master S. Peter's life, the same truth was brought prominently forward, for S. Peter, like S. Mark, had serious falls before meriting the name, "The Rock," which our Lord bestowed upon him.

II. May we not see the same law exemplified in the ordinary working of grace in the human soul—perhaps in our own souls?

There are some whose conversion reminds us of S. Paul's experience; some who, by one great act of sacrifice, break from the world, once for all, and give themselves to Christ; and whose life, like S. Paul's, is a long struggle filled with startling spiritual experiences. But these, surely, are the few. Is it not true that, in the majority of people, the working of grace is better represented by the parable of the seed growing secretly?

The chief points of this parable are—man's ignorance of the laws which govern the growth of the seed, and the very small part which he plays in fostering that growth. He casts the seed into the ground, and he harvests it when it is ripe. But all the intermediate stages of growth depend upon forces over which he has little control, and about which he knows almost nothing; for the origin of life—*why* the seed grows—is steeped in mystery.

When we read that "the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear," we are not to understand that the earth can bring

forth without the seed. We have already been told that the seed has been cast into the ground; that, given the earth as its fitting environment, man has little to do with the growth of the seed and the production of the fruit. He can hinder the growth, he can destroy the life; but he cannot produce it. And, while he may do something towards fostering it, it is not very much that depends upon him. God must send the sunshine and the rain; or the crop will be a failure.

There are two special lessons taught us by the parable, one full of encouragement—the immense vitality of grace, and the aptitude of human nature to be the sphere of its operations. The seed cannot grow without the soil; and grace finds in human nature that which it can work upon, and out of which it can build up the life of God in man.

There is a mysterious affinity between the force in the seed and that which it needs for its growth and development in the earth. Unless interfered with, if placed in the earth it will grow.

While it is necessary constantly to exhort men to correspond with the grace of God, to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling; yet there is the other side—that, after all, the work is God's work; that, if we do not frustrate it, it will bring forth fruit in due time; that grace finds congenial soil in human nature, and has a wonderful vitality—lives on in spite of neglect, in spite of everything, except the deliberate destruction caused by an act of wilful and conscious sin.

It may seem dangerous to dwell too much on this side, lest it should be made an excuse for negligence of the interests of our soul. But surely it is a side of the truth, and one that is full of encouragement, to know that the law of grace in the soul is like that of the seed in the earth; that when it is sown in baptism, unless hindered by man's own wilfulness, it should gradually bring forth fruit; "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

If our first lesson is one of encouragement, the second is the need of patience. Grace has its own laws of growth. The fruit cannot come before the blade. We read of children with their little gardens, who, after they have one day sown the seed, in their impatient curiosity dig it up the next day to see how it is growing.

The parable warns us against a similar fault in spiritual life —an over-anxiety in regard to the growth of grace in our own soul. There is such a thing as too much introspection, a morbid curiosity about our own spiritual development, which retards instead of fostering our growth.

Our great work must be to trust God and to keep watch against things which may hinder the growth of the good seed in us; to watch against temptation to sin; and, besides this, to exercise great patience with ourselves, realizing what barren soil our nature is, how slow we are to respond to divine impulses; and, therefore, how long a period must elapse before we can expect to see much fruit in our lives.

"First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." The blade comes in the springtime; but, before the corn can ripen, we must pass through the scorching heats of the summer of temptation and of trial. And we shall be wise if we regard this time of trial as the normal condition of the spiritual life; as necessary, in order that the fruit in us may ripen.

S. Paul says, "There hath no temptaion taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."[1] He means to teach us that God does not send trial unnecessarily, but for our own good; and that He never sends greater trials than He has given us grace to bear.

[1] 1 Cor. x. 13.

If you remember this it will help you to exercise patience, to be content to grow naturally, that is, gradually; and to have a great trust in GOD, "that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform (or perfect) it until the day of Jesus Christ."[1]

Sermon XCIX.

THE EDICT OF CYRUS.

(The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

2 CHRONICLES XXXVI. 22, 23.

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord GOD of heaven given me; and He hath charged me to build Him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? The Lord his GOD be with him, and let him go up."

THE last chapter of the Book of Chronicles brings to a close one great period of Jewish history—the story of the nation's youth. And what a story it was! a story of GOD'S visitations in mercy and in judgment; of a youth, simple at first, but afterwards wilful and headstrong in rebellion against GOD; the story of a nation sowing its wild oats, sowing to the whirlwind, and reaping what it sowed, in captivity and exile.

I. Discipline had to some extent done its work among the turbulent people in their captivity in Babylon, and had prepared them for that second and greater period of their national

[1] Phil. i. 6.

life, which had its rise in the decree of Cyrus, and its end in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. During this second period there are no more lapses into idolatry. We find the development, through great adversity, of an intense national spirit—a passionate love, an inordinate pride in their nation as the chosen of Jehovah.

But although, at the time of our Lord, the nation had reached a certain measure of material prosperity, its religious life had degenerated into a dead formalism, and pride in its position as the favourite of Jehovah had blinded it in regard to its responsibilities towards God, and its mission to the world.

The edict of Cyrus for the rebuilding of the temple was really the beginning of Judaism, the transformation of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel into the Jewish Church, the change back from a kingdom to something more like a theocracy again (though under Persian governors).

In the kingdom of Israel the royal power had led to apostasy, in that of Judah to idolatry. Henceforth, under the political rule of Persia, really a greater opportunity was opened for the development of the Jewish religion. The organization of the Church, which was commenced under Ezra, was gradually developed and perfected. Prayer, public and private, assumed a new importance; the Scriptures were collected; the Law was fenced in by oral tradition; synagogues were erected, and schools formed for the study of the Holy Scriptures. Everything relating to religion was placed on a plane of higher development.

It was during this second period that Judaism did its work in the preparation of the world for Christianity. And this was largely the result of the captivity in Babylon. So God brings good out of evil. For a large majority of the people did not avail themselves of the permission of Cyrus to return to Jerusalem, but either continued in Babylon, or established

themselves in other large cities, engaging in commerce, and spreading a knowledge of the true GOD throughout the principal centres of the world's population.

The third and last period of Judaism begins with the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and will continue to the end of the world. Throughout this period the mission of the Jews is largely *evidential*. To the question asked by a Christian monarch, "What is the strongest evidence of the truth of Christianity?" the reply was given, "The Jews, sire." And, indeed, the Jews form to-day a living witness to the truth of GOD'S promises, their prophetical books pointing to the coming of Christ; and their life, since they rejected Him, being certainly one of the miracles of history. Persecuted at every turn by every nation, yet never extirpated; and to-day, after a checkered experience of nearly four thousand years, they are perhaps richer and more powerful than at any period of their existence!

II. We are, however, now concerned only with the circumstances which usher in the second period of the nation's life, and truly they are wonderful, beyond words to describe!

The prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel had led the Jews to look forward to deliverance, with a hope which enabled them to keep up their national spirit, even in captivity. At last the day came, and with it the man! Seventy years were accomplished, and GOD raised up Cyrus to be His instrument, both in restoring the Jews and in preparing the world for the fulfilment of His purposes.

That Cyrus was a man of extraordinary gifts and character, we learn from contemporary history, as well as from the Bible. But he was not only, like Alexander, a great conqueror, but the Greek historians love to dwell upon his humane and generous disposition. And the terms of his decree show him to have been a religious man. It is a disputed question whether he

was a monotheist or not; but he was distinctly the guardian of religious liberties. The kings of Babylon before, in pursuance of a policy of centralization, had brought the gods of the countries they had conquered to the great Temple of Bel at Babylon. Cyrus pursued an opposite and more liberal religious policy, and restored, as contemporary history shows us, to each country its religion, but apparently showing special favour to the Jews.

It has been suggested by many [1] that the cause of this favour was the influence of Daniel, whom Cyrus, when he took Babylon, found already the third ruler of the kingdom, and the wisest and most enlightened of its statesmen. It has even been thought that Daniel called the attention of Cyrus to the Prophecy of Isaiah, in which both his action is foretold and his name mentioned; for Isaiah writes, "I am the Lord . . . That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the Temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him." [2] While Daniel's influence was the external means which GOD used; we are told also of an interior agency—that "the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus." In both cases it was GOD'S work.

You will observe that in the decree of Cyrus permission is not only given to the Jews of Babylon to depart and rebuild the Temple, but to all Jews scattered throughout his dominions; for he says, "Who is there among you of all His people? The Lord his GOD be with him, and let him go up."

It is a fact which is often overlooked, that the captivity under the Chaldeans led to a reunion of Israel and Judah. More

[1] Josephus points this out ("Antiq. Jud.," xi. 1), and his view has been followed by many in our own day.

[2] Isaiah xliv. 24, 28; xlv. 1.

than a hundred years had elapsed since the ten tribes were carried into exile, and their numbers, doubtless, had greatly diminished. But it is probable that many of them, recognizing in the representative of David a centre of union, would be likely to seek this unity in amalgamation with the exiles of Judah, since the political reasons which had divided the two kingdoms were at an end. Both alike were captives, and sympathy would draw them together. We learn from Holy Scripture that some of the ten tribes did return; for Ephraim and Manasseh are named as dwelling at Jerusalem.[1]

Cyrus, however, not only gave permission to the Jews to return, and build a temple at Jerusalem, but he provided them with the means to do so; for, as we read in the Book of Ezra,[2] he called upon his heathen subjects to assist them with money, cattle, and other commodities, in order that none might be hindered by poverty, or by want of beasts of burden, from joining the band of emigrants, and setting out on their return to Jerusalem.

Further, as a freewill offering, he adds a gift of his own, consisting of a large number of gold and silver vessels for the service of the temple. Some have thought, from the expression "beside the freewill offering," that what he called upon his own subjects to provide was really a tax levied for the restoration of the Temple; and that, in addition to the tax, he himself bestowed the gifts for its furnishing.

The number who set out were only forty-two thousand, but they refounded the nation, which struggled on, often in dire affliction, but producing its heroes in the Maccabees, until its work was done in preparing the world for the Messiah, Who came to fulfil all prophecies, and to redeem mankind.

III. There are two plain lessons which we may gather from God's dealing with the Jews in restoring them to their country.

[1] 1 Chron. ix. 3. [2] Ezra i. 4.

First, that GOD'S rule over the whole world is not only that of the Sovereign Who orders the affairs of Christian nations, but of all nations; for all history, with its strange vicissitudes, is the story of GOD'S providence.

We are reminded in one of our Collects—the prayer for the King's Majesty—that GOD is the "King of kings . . . the only Ruler of princes"; in another, the Collect in the Communion Service, that "the hearts of kings are in Thy (GOD'S) rule and governance, and that Thou dost dispose and turn them as it seems best to Thy Godly Wisdom." And we pray in the Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Easter, to GOD, "Who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men."

Everywhere GOD'S Sovereignty is felt, by all nations, and kingdoms, and peoples, and tongues. Nations may rebel and become corrupt; then GOD'S Sovereignty is seen in their punishment. Or they may fulfil His mission to the rest of the world, when His goodness is manifested in their prosperity.

The other lesson is that, when our circumstances seem darkest and most hopeless, GOD can still help us; and there may be, even then, in store for us a glorious future. This lesson is taught us in the first pages of revelation, when, after the banishment from Eden, the promise of a Saviour is given. We learn it when the flood destroys the earth; for after the deluge GOD promises Noah the blessings of seedtime and harvest, to the end of the world. We see that it was so after Israel and Judah had ended their respective courses in the misery of a captivity which was the result of their own sin, and GOD puts it into the heart of a heathen king to send them back to their country with the means to begin anew, and to lay the foundation of a nation through which the world has been abundantly blessed.

And it is so in our own individual life. When all looks darkest and most hopeless, if we will only turn to GOD in penitence, and accept our afflictions as a discipline sent to work in

us development of character, and as an opportunity for us to manifest our trust in GOD; then we too shall rise, even from the greatest adversity, purified, and strengthened, and made ready for a great future.

Sermon C.

WATCHFULNESS.

(The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. MARK XIII. 37.

"And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

WE learn from the context that the parable of the "man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch," was spoken in Holy Week after our Lord's public teaching had for ever closed. It was addressed to His disciples only, on the Mount of Olives, on the Tuesday evening, and seems to have been an abbreviated record of the parable of the talents, which S. Matthew tells us was spoken under the same circumstances. A comparison of the two parables will show that their setting is the same. It is the story of a man taking a far journey, and entrusting to his servants the care of his possessions, with the warning that he will return to receive from them an accounting of their stewardship.

In the parable of the talents, as recorded by S. Matthew, the prominent features are, the need of diligence in the use of gifts bestowed; that responsibility is in proportion to ability, and reward in accordance with fidelity. In S. Mark's account,

which is fragmentary in form, these features are passed over, and our attention is directed to only one point—which S. Matthew does not notice—the uncertainty of the moment of the Master's return, and therefore the necessity of watchfulness.

In S. Matthew's account the Master gives His servants talents according to their ability. In S. Mark's, we are told in general terms that He gave to every man his work. But here he also adds the injunction to watch, giving as His reason the uncertainty of the moment when the accounting must be rendered.

I. The first point, then, for our consideration is the element of uncertainty which mingles with what is the most certain of all things in this world—death and judgment. For, while we need not confine the accounting to these two solemn events in the life of every man, yet it is evident that these are the two occasions when the account must be given, the two occasions of our Lord's return, which are most certain, and yet most uncertain.

1. Death is the most certain event in man's life. Take a little child in its mother's arms. How little we know about its future. It is impossible to foretell whether that child will be happy or miserable in this world, whether it will live to be rich or poor, whether it will become learned or remain ignorant. Indeed, there is only one event which can be foretold with absolute certainty, about each child of man, and that is, it will die.

But, on the other hand, this event, which is so absolutely certain is most uncertain in regard to time, and place, and circumstances. We do not know when we shall die, at what stage of our life the message will come which calls us away; whether in youth, in full manhood, or in old age; but we know that when that message does come it must be obeyed, and obeyed at once. There can be no delay, no pleading for a

few more years or even days. When that message comes, "at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning," shall we be found ready, shall we be found watching?

Again, death is most uncertain in regard to place. We know not *where* we shall die; at home, surrounded by loving friends, with the consolations of religion; or far away from home, and alone.

Then we know not *how* we shall die; after a long illness which has given us time for preparation; or suddenly, by some accident. Truly, death is the most uncertain event in life. And immediately after death comes the Particular Judgment, when we shall know what is written by the recording angel in the book of Judgment against our life, when we shall read in our Lord's face our sentence.

2. While Christ's coming to the individual soul is realized at the moment of death, in the parable the reference is rather to His second coming to His Church, which will not take place until the last great Day of Judgment. This, too, is absolutely certain, and yet most uncertain as regards the time when it will take place.

We know that in the Apostolic age Christians looked for our Lord's appearing; and there has been no age of the Church when holy men have not waited and watched, and seen signs which made them hope that the end was near, that the Master was returning to claim His own. Alike for the Church and for the individual Christian the warning is uttered, "Watch . . . for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh." We are told that coming will be as a thief in the night in its unexpectedness, as the lightning which shineth from the east to the west in its suddenness. And therefore we are exhorted to watch, that we may be found ready when our Lord comes. Ready for what? Ready to welcome Him with joy, ready to render our account with confidence?

II. But if we are to render an account, we must keep an account; for this is very much what is meant by watching. To be practical and definite—we must practise self-examination; for this is the only way in which we can keep an account of our sins, the principal way in which we can fulfil the duty of watchfulness.

To watch implies chiefly two things, the practice of self-examination, and the exercise of the virtue of hope.

1. By self-examination we endeavour to discover whether our spiritual enemy has obtained lodgment in our hearts, and to what extent. The trail of the foe is detected by the sins of act and of habit which he leaves behind in our lives. Superficial self-examination will result in the discovery of some glaring faults, but will not reveal the full extent of the havoc wrought in our nature by sin. Our foe is marvellously cunning. Holy Scripture tells us that he is able even to disguise himself as an angel of light. And then, unfortunately, he has a powerful ally in our soul—our own self-love. And if we are not very careful, if we do not earnestly seek the help of the Holy Ghost in our self-examination, if we have not a real desire to find out the worst about ourselves, Satan and self-love will deceive us again and again, while perfunctory self-examinations will be worse than useless.

We must make our examination as scouts in war time, who are striving by every means in their power to discover the whereabouts and the strength of the enemy. We must leave no part of our nature unsearched, no lurking place of evil undiscovered. And we must remember that if Satan has as an ally our own self-love, capable of blinding us to many sins, we have as an ally the Holy Ghost, the Light of God Himself. If only we will invoke His aid, and co-operate with Him, He will help us to bring to light all the hidden things of darkness, He will enable us to see ourselves exactly as we are.

We have not, however, only to watch against the evil which has already found lodgment in our hearts, but we must also watch against that which is striving to obtain entrance into our souls. An army not only sends out scouts to discover the force and disposition of the enemy who have invaded the country, but it keeps sentinels posted around the camp to watch against attacks. We must, therefore, not only strive to find out the sins which we have committed, that we may repent of them, but the methods of attack, the modes of temptation, with which Satan is trying to lead us into sin.

In warfare a false attack is sometimes made on one side of the camp to draw attention to that point, that, under cover of this attack, the camp may be assaulted from a different quarter. So it sometimes happens in the spiritual life, that we are so busy in repelling the temptations to certain besetting sins, that we do not observe the hold upon us which other sins are obtaining. It is quite possible in the spiritual combat to be too much engrossed in our besetting sins, and so to pass over lightly sins of a very different class, which gradually form a habit and gain lodgment in our nature. We need thus to be on our guard at all points, and often to examine ourselves in respect to sins which we do not *think* we have committed, in order that we may be quite sure that we are free from them.

Another common stratagem of the devil's is to withdraw temptation for a long time from some weak point in our character, so that we may be lulled into a false security, and thinking that an old besetting sin is entirely conquered, we may cease to watch against it, and turn all our attention upon some other temptation which assaults us. If we do so, when we least expect it we shall be likely to fall before a sudden attack of the old sin, and our fall may be a very grievous one.

So it was with S. Peter. He was so sure of himself, so certain that he had overcome the natural instability of his char-

acter, that, though warned that he would deny Christ, he could not think such a thing possible, and the result was that he denied his Master three times most shamefully!

So, probably, it was with Judas, whose besetting sin, before he became one of our Lord's followers, was covetousness. When, by enrolling himself among Christ's Apostles, he practically took vows of poverty, he thought that he never could be tempted to that sin of covetousness again. But after awhile he was elected treasurer of the Apostolic company, he bare the bag, came face to face with his old besetting sin, and, probably before he realized it, had yielded to the temptation to steal.

2. Watchfulness, however, not only implies the practice of self-examination, but the exercise of the virtue of hope. We are to be longing for our Lord's return, to have a desire "to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." [1]

But not only must we long for that great coming at the moment of death and the day of judgment, but for all those many visits by which Christ encourages and blesses the soul. He visits us in the hour of prayer and meditation; He comes to us in our Bible reading, in the Sacraments, and in all the opportunities He puts in our way, opportunities of self-denial, of helping others, of resisting sin, of proving our love for Him. As our Lord said to His disciples, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when He will return from the wedding; that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open unto Him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching." [2]

[1] Phil. i. 23. [2] S. Luke xii. 35-37.

Sermon CI.

A NATION'S DANGER.

(The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.)

JEREMIAH V. 30, 31.

"A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and My people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

IN the Old Testament lesson to-day the first and the last verses stand out conspicuously, and arrest our attention by their strangeness.

The first verse is a challenge from GOD. In the previous chapters fearful punishments have been denounced upon Jerusalem. The question might arise, Are they not too severe? GOD's answer is a challenge: Find a righteous man within the city, and all these punishments shall be remitted. In the words of Jeremiah, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it."

This verse is followed by three clearly defined sections, in which the moral corruption of Jerusalem is set forth.

Then comes the striking conclusion: "An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule at their hands; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

Let us consider to-day these two passages.

I. "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof,

if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it"; that is, Jerusalem.

We are reminded of the quest of Diogenes, when he started out with his lantern to find a man in Athens; that is, one who was worthy of the name of man.

We must, however, observe in passing, that in the original the emphasis is not on the word "man." The Hebrew might as well be translated, "Seek if ye can find any one that executeth judgment." The emphasis of the sentence is on the *righteousness* of the person sought.

We are carried back in thought to Abraham's intercession for Sodom, and GOD'S promise that, if ten righteous were found in the city, for their sake He would not destroy it.

Here the proportion seems to be even worse. GOD says to the prophet: Find *one* man who is righteous, and Jerusalem shall be spared. We are, of course not to infer from this that Jeremiah and Baruch, and the few who were with him, were not righteous; but that they were excepted, and that GOD challenges *them* to find, outside of their own small flock, one righteous man in Jerusalem.

Two characteristics are specified as constituting a righteous man in GOD'S eyes; one, that he be a seeker after probity, or uprightness; for the word translated "truth," in the clause "that seeketh the truth," does not mean truth in words, or in matters of belief, but in actions. One characteristic, then, is a high standard of morals, a lofty aim in life; the other, which comes first in the verse, that he shall practise righteousness or justice; for this is the meaning of "executing judgment."

The man whom GOD seeks, the man after His own heart, is one whose *aim* is right, and whose *actions* correspond with his aim. Such is the righteous man.

In the next three sections we learn what would have been

the result of the search, the fearful state of moral corruption into which Jerusalem had sunk. And then in the last two verses this is summed up in the striking words of our text.

II. Not only is immorality rife in the city, but the very foundation of the national life is poisoned. The prophets prophesy falsely, the priests bear rule at their hands; and the people—GOD'S people—love to have it so.

A nation may be sunk in iniquity, and the voice of religion may be silenced. And this state is terrible, and yet not without hope; for the voice which has been silenced may be raised again in a call to repentance which may lead to national reformation and the restoration of GOD'S worship.

But in Jerusalem at this period a far more appalling condition prevailed. Not only was there the grossest immorality everywhere, but the very fountains of religion were poisoned by it. Religion, as it were, spread a cloak over the iniquities of the nation, and justified them; for the prophets prophesied falsely, and the priests bore rule at their hands; and GOD'S people were satisfied; indeed, loved to have it so. Immorality parading under the garb of religion! This was the state which Jerusalem had reached. This was the sin which brought down GOD'S chastisement upon the nation.

But let us inquire precisely what is meant by Jeremiah's description of the climax of evil in Judah—that the prophets prophesied falsely, and the priests bore rule at their hands.

The priesthood was the ordinary ministry ordained by GOD to watch over the interests of religion in the nation. They were to preside over the worship of GOD, to be the ordinary teachers of the people concerning the law of GOD. They were the guardians of truth, the teachers of morals, the directors of worship, the dispensers of that grace (if we may use this word of GOD'S gifts under the old covenant), through the sacrificial system which they ministered.

The scope of their action was limited. Their ministry was determined, in every direction, by the Mosaic code, both moral and ceremonial. This it was their duty to guard, and preserve with the utmost fidelity, and to minister incorruptibly.

The prophets, on the other hand, belonged to an extraordinary ministry, specially endowed by God, and raised up from time to time to declare His Will; to condemn, with fearless voice, national declensions from God's law. The prophet did not, like the priest, belong to a particular class. He might be chosen from any class. He might be a priest like Samuel, or a layman like Amos. Or even women, like Miriam and Deborah, might have the prophetic gift.

The prophet received a special inspiration from God for a special purpose, to declare some message of God, to denounce some sin of the people, to meet some emergency in national life. The prophet, therefore, always represented the best spirit of his age, was possessed of the purest and most unselfish motives, manifested a transparent honesty in deep, religious zeal, the highest moral and religious aspirations.

But, as the best things, when perverted, become the worst; so, for a prophet to prophesy falsely, was indeed a horrible thing! For it involved, either claiming inspiration which he had not received; delivering a message which had not been entrusted to him, as in the case of Ahab's prophets, headed by Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah; [1] or else, worse still, being untrue to his high mission, and, while knowing God's Will—for the sake of gain of some sort or other—deliberately setting himself to frustrating God's purpose, as in the case of Balaam.

When, therefore, prophets prophesied falsely, the only safeguard for the people was the priesthood. But Jeremiah tells us that, not only did the prophets prophesy falsely, but the priests bore rule at their hands; that is, were in league with

[1] 1 Kings xxii. 11.

them to corrupt the national life by giving the sanction of religion to the licentiousness of the times.

But even when prophets and priests were allied in this unholy work, there was still the possibility that the moral sense of the people might rise up and protest against such travesty of religion. However, Jeremiah tells us that in this case the people loved to have it so. The nation which had once been so great and so religious had become utterly demoralized. Prophets, priests, and people, all went hand in hand in their works of iniquity. The laws of GOD were broken; the worship of GOD was neglected; the prophets, the true prophets of GOD, like Jeremiah, were persecuted. The people were satisfied. They loved to have it so.

But GOD asks, through Jeremiah, "What will ye do in the end thereof?" No nation can go on in its evil course for ever. There must be an end. Retribution awaits such a nation; and GOD, through Jeremiah, had revealed to Jerusalem the retribution which awaited it, and asks, "What will ye do in the end?"

When the host of the Chaldeans had broken down the walls of the city, had destroyed the Temple, and carried away the people as captives, then it was too late to avert the calamity, for the end of such national life is national ruin!

So it was of old with the Canaanites—the Israelites were GOD's instrument in their punishment. Now GOD's people have corrupted themselves, and a similar doom awaits them.

III. In studying this passage of Jeremiah we must not content ourselves with a consideration of the mad infatuation of the Jews, and its result in their national ruin; but we must remember that the same causes have produced the same results in other nations, in every nation where they have been allowed to work unchecked. And we must go on to consider whether these prophecies do not contain a warning needed in our own time.

The prophets of our day who claim to speak with special inspiration, to bring a special message, like the prophets of old, are not confined to any one class. They are to be found in the Church and out of the Church; in the priesthood and among the laity. There are many of them, many new messages, many new gospels, demanding our attention—the prophets of socialism, of labour, of capital,—prophets who desire to overthrow the old order, and substitute one which they promise shall be better.

And in the Church there are prophets who would rob us of the Word of God, of the priesthood of the Church, of the revelation that eternal punishment awaits the unrepentant sinner. They all *claim* to be inspired; but the claim of all cannot be true. Which are the false prophets?

Then, too, the priests, whose office it is to guard the truth, to guide in morals, to dispense grace, to lead in the worship of God—what are they doing in our day? Do some of them desire to bear rule at the hands of the false prophets, because their gospel happens to be popular, because their code of life is easy and lax?

And the people—what is their verdict? Do they love to have it so—an easy gospel, watered down to their own lax lives, a hazy preaching of doctrine which will not give offence to any one? Or do they demand that the priesthood shall be true to its high vocation, and shall proclaim, in the words of S. Paul, though "an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be anathema"?[1]

Let us strive to read the signs of the times, to examine the prophecies of the day, whether they be true or false; and to range ourselves on God's side, not only for our own sakes, but for the sake of our country, the nation which God loves so dearly.

[1] Gal. i. 8.

Sermon CII.

THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN.

(The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. Luke xiii. 20, 21.

"And again He said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

IN this chapter we have a pair of parables, the mustard seed and the leaven, which we find in similar relationship among the seven parables in the thirteenth chapter of S. Matthew. They are commonly called the parables of the kingdom, because they all primarily refer to the establishment and growth of Christ's kingdom on earth; and, with the exception of that of the sower, all begin with the words "The kingdom of heaven."

The first six fall into three pairs; and in each pair the two parables, while in contrast to one another, are mutually complementary, and each exhibits an aspect of the kingdom of heaven, both in its corporate and individual capacity.

I. We are concerned to-day only with the second pair, which we find contrasted in this chapter of S. Luke—the parable of the mustard seed and that of the leaven.

As we have said, these parables are contrasted with one another. The mustard seed exhibits the kingdom in its extensive character, the leaven in its intensive aspect. The former dwells on the side of the visible growth of the Church; the latter on that of its invisible influence. The one draws attention to the great difference between the mustard seed and the tree in

the branches of which the birds lodge—a difference not only of size, but of actual appearance, a difference amounting to real change—while the other, that of the leaven, brings before us the identity of the dough before and after the leaven has done its work. When all is leavened the dough has risen, and so increased in size; but in shape and general appearance it is much the same.

Although the parables form a contrast in almost every feature, yet they are mutually complementary. There can be no extensive growth of the Church unless there be an intensive growth. There can be no outward manifestation unless there has been inward and hidden work. The parables therefore bring before us two aspects of the kingdom of heaven, of the working of grace, which, though contrasted, are but complements of one another.

The historical fulfilment of the parable of the mustard seed is seen in the fourth century, when the world crowded into the Church and strove to lodge under the shadow of its branches. That of the leaven is manifested in the fifth and sixth centuries, when the hordes of Teuton barbarians from the North invaded the South of Europe, and overwhelmed its Christianity. Then was the spiritual leaven hidden amongst the mass of invaders, like the leaven in the three measures of meal. But the leaven did its work; the barbarians were Christianized; and, from oppressors of the Church, became its noblest children.

II. Let us, however, confine our attention to the parable of the leaven, and, passing over its primary interpretation of the work of the Church, let us take it as setting forth the work of grace in the individual Christian.

The woman in the parable may be taken for the Church, or for the Holy Ghost, by Whose agency at baptism the leaven of grace is put into the soul. The Church is the visible agent in baptism, but the Holy Ghost is the invisible Agent, by

Whose operation we are born of water and the Holy Spirit, and become children of God.

The woman presides over her house, which contains all that is necessary for the work of bread making; for instance, the fire, which by its heat assists the leaven, and enables it to work in the dough and to raise it; the fire representing that divine charity, without which grace cannot work in man's soul.

May we not venture to suggest that the method by which the leaven works, gradually transforming and raising the dough, without changing its appearance or character, marvellously symbolizes one aspect of the work of grace in the soul, in that, while transforming and sanctifying every part of man's nature, *it does not change his natural character and gifts?*

Let me explain what I mean. We are each endowed at birth with certain natural tendencies, which we speak of as our temperament, and which forms the basis of our character. Temperament includes those various forces which—if one may use the expression—constitute our general make-up. There are the forces of intellect and of will, together with traits inherited from ancestors, or bestowed by God.

Now grace works from within, and gradually takes into itself the whole nature, sanctifying one part after another, till the whole is leavened by grace. It is difficult to say where it begins; but, if allowed to work without hindrance, one gift after another is transformed by it; and when its work is done there is a real identity of character and gifts with the character and gifts which existed before the work of grace began, and yet a transformation and sanctification of them. We are the same in temperament, possessed of the same gifts and character; and yet all is changed, raised and perfected by the action of this hidden force.

Natural character is like the dough without the leaven. The leaven works upon the dough, raising it, making it light, pala-

table and wholesome. Yet it remains dough, and even after it has been baked in the oven it is substantially the same as the dough before the leaven was put into it. So in the development of character through the operation of grace. The nature is lifted up, expanded, developed, and perfected. Yet it is the same nature. Grace has not destroyed one characteristic or endowment. It has filled out and perfected what is good; it has enabled us to control what is not good; but the saint has the same natural character as he had before the work of sanctification was begun in him.

We see this in S. Peter. The characteristics of the sanguine temperament, with which he was naturally endowed, were not destroyed by the work of grace in him; they were strengthened and ennobled; so that in him, the weakest of all the temperaments, the sanguine temperament, was so transformed and sanctified, that he became the rock, the leader of the apostles, the martyr of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, it is, perhaps, not too much to say that S. Peter became the rock in *spite* of his natural character, not *because* of it; for, as we know by experience, and as we see exemplified in S. Peter's life, the sanguine temperament is the least stable of all—the most amiable, perhaps the most attractive; but with greater tendencies to weakness than the others, with less stability, less power of perseverance, than its opposite, the choleric temperament.

To take another example, and one who was the very opposite to S. Peter, S. John—who with his brother S. James was surnamed by our Lord "Boanerges," "sons of thunder" [1]—there can be no doubt about his temperament. It was the choleric. It gained for him the title of "Thunderer." And yet the Son of Thunder was transformed, by the work of grace, into the Apostle of Love. But in this transforma-

[1] *Cf.* S. Mark iii. 17.

tion his natural characteristics were not destroyed, only sanctified. His tremendous energy was directed into a different channel; and the temperament which might have been such a stumbling-block to its possessor, sanctified and controlled by grace, enabled him, through a long life, to do his Master's work, to follow his Master's example, most perfectly.

Even in extreme old age, when he wrote the Epistles which have come down to us, we recognize in the vehemence of his language the smouldering fires of his choleric temperament. The keynote of the Epistles is love. And yet S. John can write, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a *murderer*";[1] and, "If a man say, I love GOD, and hateth his brother, he is a *liar*."[2]

In the early days of his ministry his Master rebuked the unsanctified manifestation of his indignation when he wished to call down fire from heaven upon a village of the Samaritans which would not receive his Lord. But Jesus rebuked him, and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."[3]

By the work of grace S. John's character was sanctified, but his natural impetuosity was not destroyed, only directed into another channel, only controlled by a different spirit.

In this parable, as in that of the seed growing secretly, the side of the work chiefly emphasized is GOD's side. As there the husbandman did but little after the seed was sown, leaving the forces of nature to do their work and to produce the harvest, so here the woman does but little to assist the leaven after it is put into the meal. It works by its own power, in a hidden, but in a sure, way.

We must not, of course, press this too far, and forget that we can interpose deliberately such an obstacle, in the character of a perverse will, that even the leaven cannot overcome it. But we do learn from this parable to trust GOD and to be patient; that, though we cannot always trace the operation of

[1] 1 S. John iii. 15. [2] 1 S. John iv. 20. [3] S. Luke ix. 55.

His grace from day to day, yet that grace is working, and, unless we deliberately hinder it, will at last raise our whole nature, sanctifying us, body, soul, and spirit, unto the Day of Christ's appearing.

Sermon CIII.

JEHOIAKIM'S PENKNIFE.

(The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

JEREMIAH XXXVI. 23.

"And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth."

A SPECIAL interest attaches to this chapter of Jeremiah, as containing the earliest account of the formation of a canonical book. Not that this was the first written prophecy; for the quotations of one prophet from another imply that other prophets had committed their inspired message to writing. But this is the first recorded instance, and we may obtain from the circumstances under which it was written some insight into the purpose of the formation of the written word, as well as some striking lessons concerning its reception.

I. We shall observe, first, that the roll which Baruch wrote at Jeremiah's dictation did not contain *new* truth. The utterances of the prophet had already been made public. So that the primary purpose in writing them down seems to have been that the prophecies might be preserved. Truth once discovered may be lost to the world, but it cannot change—What is once

true is always true. Hence, in the Church, that which has once been put forth authoritatively by the Church, in a general council, for instance, can never change. But, while truth cannot change, it may be lost. Hence, the importance of a written revelation.

Some people speak of the written Word of God as though it *preceded* the teachings of Christianity. But we know that this is a mistake. The Gospels are the record of what our Lord Jesus Christ said and did; His living utterances and actions, however, preceded by years the written record which forms our Gospels. In the same way S. Paul's Epistles were written, for the most part, to remind those to whom they were addressed of his oral teachings, and to clear up misunderstandings in regard to them.

We see, therefore, that the method of writing an inspired book, described in this chapter, was very much that which we know to have been followed, more or less, in the production of the New Testament canon. The Gospels were, for the most part, a description of the apostolic preaching, which itself was largely a narration of what our Lord said and did when He was on earth. While in S. Paul's Epistles we even find that, like Jeremiah, the apostle employed an amanuensis, to whom he dictated his message.

Again, the prophecies were written that they might reach a larger audience, not only in Jeremiah's own day, but that they might endure for all time and speak to all people.

How many centuries have passed since the books of the Hebrew prophets were written! And yet, how much we learn from them even in our own day! One of the great evidences of Christianity is to be found in the preparation of the world for it through prophecy. And this, not merely in the application of particular prophecies to events in our Lord's life, but also in the general trend of prophecy.

If we regard the world as God's temple, at one time in darkness through sin, we may look upon each prophecy as the lighting of a lamp in that temple. And as each new lamp is lighted, the darkness is gradually overcome; until at last the Lord of the temple enters, Who is the Light of the world, to Whom all prophecies point; and their light is, as it were, lost in His!

Again, we must remember of prophecy, and indeed of all Scripture, that its teaching is not exhausted by its primary application, but that we may discover in it new meanings applicable to the varying needs of the Church. In later years—even in our own day, the diligent study of Holy Scripture has led to the recognition of treasures never before recognized, and of truths securely buried in Holy Scripture, but only now brought to light. And this is doubtless one of the great purposes for which revelation was written, that it may be to the Church in all ages an inexhaustible mine of truth, yielding its rich ore to the diligent worker, and so ever inviting new investigations on the part of the reverent student of God's Word.

II. We may learn some striking lessons from the reception accorded to Baruch's roll. It reached three classes—the people, the princes, and the king, Jehoiakim.

It was first read to the people at the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house, and apparently reached the heart of only one of the number who heard it. Michaiah, the son of Gemariah, in whose chamber Baruch read the roll, was so impressed by its contents, that he went down into the King's house, and reported what he had heard to all the princes who sat there.

How often this is the case! A great multitude hear God's Word, listen to the reader or preacher; but only one receives

the good seed into an honest and good heart, and brings forth fruit.

The people went away. But Michaiah at once acted upon what he had heard, and carried the news to the princes. And they sent for Baruch and requested him to read the prophecies to them. And when they heard his words they "turned shuddering one to another" and said, "We must tell the king of all these words." However, before doing so, they investigated the authority and authenticity of what Baruch had read, asking him, "Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth?" When they were satisfied that the prophecy indeed proceeded from Jeremiah, they carried the matter to the king.

The king commanded the roll to be read to him. But, instead of hearkening, gave way to impatience and anger, and in his folly destroyed the roll. Folly, indeed! For, if the prophecies were true, the destruction of the roll would not hinder the accomplishment of the judgments denounced therein; and, if untrue, the roll was but an inanimate object, on which it was foolish for him to wreak his anger. The roll might be cut and burned, but the truth could not be suppressed or killed.

We may notice in the destruction two stages; first, that the king, after three or four columns had been read, cut them (or caused them to be cut) with a scribe's erasing knife, and then cast the roll into the fire which was burning in the chafing dish; so that all the roll was consumed.

And what was the result? The roll was rewritten with *additional* matter; for we are told that "there were added besides unto them many like words." Here we have a hint of the development of revelation. In all God's works we may trace the gradual mark of progress in man, in external nature, and also in the Word of God itself.

We learn, then, that truth cannot be killed. If one roll is

burned, another can be written; if one prophet is killed, another can be raised up to take his place. Individuals may rebel against God and delay His purpose; but they cannot frustrate it. The judgments foretold by Jeremiah came to pass.

III. Have we not, in the conduct of Jehoiakim, an example of the reception which God's message meets with even in our own day? How many there are who apply the penknife to God's Word, who wish to keep part, but not all, of God's revelation! How many critics of all kinds! There are the so-called Rationalists, who reject all the supernatural in the Bible, who would cut out all the miracles, including that miracle by which, S. Paul says, Christianity stands or falls—the miracle of our Lord's Resurrection.

There are others who would reject, or at least ignore, such parts of the moral teaching of the New Testament as do not square their own low standard of morality. There are others, like Jehoiakim, who indignantly reject the idea of judgment and of punishment. Such are the Universalists, who would cut out or explain away all reference to eternal punishment, even though it be the express revelation of Jesus Christ Himself!

Our own day, alas! has the sad distinction of having produced more of these surgical critics than all the ages which have preceded it. The great purpose of these critics is not to study the Word of God, that they may learn from it God's Will; but that they may see how much they can cut out without entirely destroying it. Fortunately, they do not agree among themselves. Some would destroy the Word of God completely. These see in it no other kind of inspiration than they see in Shakespeare. But most of them begin by giving up a part, the part which they do not like, which does not commend itself to their judgment. Many who begin by giving up a part end by giving up all. Many who, like Jehoiakim, begin with a

knife, end by burning the whole roll. There is always this danger of surrendering any part of the truth, that we are likely eventually to give up the whole.

But the lesson we may draw from Jehoiakim's futile attempt to destroy the roll, is surely one of encouragement. Another roll was written, more prophecies were added, and they came true—they were accomplished. So in our day GOD'S Word will remain GOD'S Word in spite of critics, and the truth contained therein cannot be changed; the judgments denounced therein will come to pass.

Disbelief in eternal punishment will not hinder any soul from going to hell, from being lost. But belief in hell has saved thousands of souls. No one who is familiar with the lives of the saints can fail to remember how many ascribed their first serious thoughts about GOD to fear of eternal loss.

This may not be the highest motive—it is not the ultimate motive—for the service of GOD. But it may be, it often has been, the first check in a life of sin. The thought of the consequences in eternity has made the sinner halt; and then, when he has turned from his sin, the love of GOD has led him to heaven!

Let us learn, then, from Jehoiakim's evil example, to avoid all temptation to mutilate GOD'S Word, to pare it down to our own low standard. Let us, rather, strive to accept it in all its fulness, and to rise up to its highest ideals, in the sure confidence that GOD will give us grace to fulfil them; that He does not demand impossibilities, but that what He commands He will always give us grace to carry out.

Sermon CIV.

THE FINDING OF THE SOUL.

(The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. Luke xv. 8.

"Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?"

THE fifteenth chapter of S. Luke is one of the most wonderful in the Gospels. It contains a trilogy of parables, setting forth, under different images, the relationship which exists between God and the soul.

Each parable begins by depicting the condition of man apart from God; a condition of helplessness, like that of the lost sheep; of uselessness, like that of the lost piece of money; of utter misery, like that of the prodigal son. Each ends with the recovery of the soul to God; but dwells, not so much on man's happiness—great as that must be—as on the joy of God at the response of the soul to His love. And further, we may observe, that each brings before us some special aspect of God's work for the soul in winning it back to Himself.

S. Ambrose sees, in the father, the first Person of the Holy Trinity; in the shepherd, Christ; and in the woman, the Church. Others, however, have pointed out that, inasmuch as the Church is the organ of the Holy Ghost, the woman may be taken as setting forth the special work of the Third Person of the ever-blessed Trinity in the saving of the soul.

Let us confine ourselves to-day to the second of the three parables, and turn our attention especially to God's work for the individual soul as set forth in this parable.

I. The first thing we observe is the very striking indication of the value of the soul in God's eyes. For while, in the parable of the lost sheep *pity*, and in that of the prodigal son *pity and parental affection*, may have been the motive of God's action, and may sufficiently explain the long seeking, the patient waiting, and the loving welcome; in that of the lost drachma neither of these motives can be found; but an altogether different one is set forth—the intrinsic value of the soul itself.

The woman in the parable realizes her need of the money she has lost, recognizes that she is distinctly poorer on account of its loss. And if we may venture to apply to God the idea suggested by this imagery, we are surely taught here that in some mysterious manner God is poorer for the loss of a soul; that in some inexplicable though real way God has need of the soul.

Therefore, the soul is not only of value to its possessor on account of its capacity for happiness in eternity; but it is of value to God, Who has a purpose for it, and Who in a sense needs it for the acccomplishment of His purpose.

II. We may next trace the steps by which the individual soul, as represented by the lost piece of money, is recovered and brought back to God. Only two steps are dwelt upon in the parable; but these really include all the work of the Holy Ghost in winning the soul to God. This work is summed up in the lighting of the candle and the sweeping of the house diligently.

The lighting of the candle. The gift of light is the beginning of God's work; light which reveals the condition of the soul, the work needing to be done, and the glorious possibilities which will follow the accomplishment of that work.

So it was in the primeval chaos, of which the first chapter of Genesis tells us. "The earth was without form, and void";

that is, was wasteness and desolation. And God said, "Let there be light: and there was light."

Thus the work of God began with the gift of light; light to see the ruin, to realize the desolation; but more, to reveal the possibilities of order, and beauty, and usefulness, latent in the ruined earth.

In the parable the candle is lighted, the darkness is dispersed by the illumination of the Holy Ghost. And what is revealed? In that light alone man sees the true condition of his soul, the layers of dust, the result of years of carelessness and neglect, which obscure the image of God in the soul, and hide that image even from the man himself.

"In Thy light shall we see light,"[1] is the profound utterance of the Psalmist. How much depends upon the light in which a thing is viewed! The same landscape on a gloomy day and in the glorious sunlight, how different it seems, though every object upon which we gaze is precisely the same.

A room dimly lighted by a feeble candle, and the same room with the light of day shining in through the open shutters —how changed it appears! By candle-light the walls and floor did not attract our attention; but the sunlight reveals every stain and blotch, and the room, which appeared passably fair, is seen to be foul, and dirty, and uncared for.

How much depends upon the light in which a thing is viewed. The man who at night should go out with a rush-light to examine the colours of the flowers in his garden, or the gorgeous plumage of a tropical humming bird, would gain but little conception of the beauties of these creatures of God.

But of all things in the world, the one which most needs to be seen in God's light, if we are to discover its beauty, is the soul of man! How many men, for lack of *this* light, have no conception of the real beauty and glory of their own souls!

[1] Psalm xxxvi. 9.

By the world's light they recognize in themselves many gifts, intellectual and moral; gifts of reason and of imagination—the artistic temperament, the musical gift, the gift of poetry, or practical gifts, such as power of organization, originality of thought, grasp of details.

But the one gift, in comparison with which all others sink into insignificance, the divine gift, the image of God in the soul, is hidden from men by the dust of sin, or at least of earthiness; and that dust, regarded in the world's light, seems natural, and is not viewed as a disfigurement or blemish; but in God's light, when the candle of the Holy Spirit has been lighted, the dust stands revealed in all its incongruity and repulsiveness!

III. But not only does the light of the Holy Spirit reveal the dust; but it is the work of the Holy Spirit (if man will co-operate) to remove that dust and to reveal what is hidden beneath—the image of God, the coin which bears the stamp of the heavenly treasury.

Some have drawn a striking analogy between the coin stamped with the image of the reigning sovereign, and the soul impressed with the image of God, the Lord of all. But, beautiful as the analogy would be, it can scarcely be pressed in this case, since the word δραχμήν, translated "a piece of silver," signifies the Greek drachma, which did not, like the Latin denarius, bear upon it the emperor's image and superscription; but was generally stamped with some device—an owl, or tortoise, or the head of Minerva.

Not only is light the gift of the Holy Ghost, but penitence also; for our Lord tells us that when the Holy Ghost is come, "He will convince (reprove) the world of sin."[1] That is, He will bring home to the sinner's conscience the true state of his soul, and will enable him so to repent that his sin may be done away.

[1] S. John xvi. 8.

This part of the work of the Holy Ghost in the soul is described under the image of a woman sweeping her house diligently. That sweeping is disagreeable work; the dust flies about the room, fills the air, is drawn into the lungs, causing a choking sensation. But it is the only way to find the coin. Observe, too, the kind of sweeping; that it is *diligent* sweeping, not superficial, and that it is persevered in until the drachma is found.

So must it be with penitence. It is hard, disagreeable work, not only to face in self-examination the sins and negligences of the past; but by contrition and confession, and the satisfaction of amendment, to sweep those sins out of the soul, to persevere until penitence has her perfect work, and by the agency of the Holy Spirit the precious Blood of Christ is applied to the soul to cleanse it, causing it once again to reflect the image of God.

Then the lost piece of money is found, the character and purpose of the soul are revealed, and in God's light man comes to see what he is, and what God wills him to be. Man comes to discover his splendid possibilities, his supernatural powers, his glorious end. What a joyous awakening is this, what happiness it brings!

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."[1]

As the dust is removed and the soul cleansed, the individual finds his happiness in discovering God in his own nature, reflected in his own soul. Happy are the pure, that is, the cleansed (*καθαροί*), in heart: for they shall see God. Not only shall they see Him with the eye of faith upon His throne in heaven but in their own souls, with the spiritual eye, cleansed by penitence.

God always sees His own image in the soul, even beneath the dust of sin. And this perhaps, in some measure, explains

[1] S. Matt. v. 8.

God's love for the soul and its intrinsic value; for nothing so bears witness to the value of the soul as God's love for it.

We love unworthy objects, because in the world's light we are deceived about their real character. But God cannot be deceived, and cannot love an unworthy object. Hence, though marred by sin, God must see in man something worthy of love. And is not this something God's own image in man?

Two simple thoughts with which to sum up, both full of encouragement; the one, the intrinsic value of our own soul in spite of sin, the other God's unwearied love for it, a love which leads Him to seek the soul which is lost, patiently to wait for it; by His light revealing its true condition, by His grace leading it to penitence, by His love bestowing upon it, even here on earth, a foretaste of the happiness of heaven.

Sermon CV.

NOAH, DANIEL, AND JOB.

(The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

Ezekiel xiv. 20.

"Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness."

THE Prophet Ezekiel, a later contemporary of Jeremiah, addressed his prophecies to the exiles on the river Chebar in northern Mesopotamia. He was one of those of noble family who were carried into exile with Jehoiachin, when the mass of the people were left behind for awhile in Judæa; and the period of his prophecy corresponded with the miserable reign and death of Zedekiah,

the destruction of the temple, the sacking of Jerusalem, and the final deportation of its inhabitants.

The seeds of idolatry, which for so long a time had been the curse of Judah, remained in Jerusalem after Josiah's reformation, even among the priests, and were in a lesser degree to be found among the exiles in Babylon. In spite, however, of their unfaithfulness to Jehovah, there was a superstitious belief among the Jews, born of pride, that God was pledged to protect their city and people; that, having been once consecrated to Him by solemn vows, they belonged to Him, and that He must therefore take care of them.

The evil effect of this delusion was twofold. It led, on the one hand, to the calamitous rebellion of Zedekiah; and, on the other, it was an obstacle to that penitence which alone could restore the people to God's favour.

I. In the section of the Prophecy of Ezekiel from which our text is taken, we have the answer to a question, which, if not put to Ezekiel in words, was in the minds of many of his fellow exiles, and which operated as an excuse for not facing their desperate condition and striving to amend it by penitence. The question was: Can God reject a people who have been consecrated to Him, as the Jews were? Is He not pledged to protect them?

The answer which Ezekiel gives is, that God's promises are conditional upon the faithful service of His people; and further, that the blessings which God specially promised were largely spiritual blessings, which the Jews valued not at all; for they contented themselves with the subordinate promises of material prosperity, and the security of their city and kingdom.

Moreover, Ezekiel goes on to show that, when a people have become so corrupt as to bring down national judgments upon them, individual sanctity will not avail to save any but the individual. The Prophet denounces upon Jerusalem God's

four sore judgments—the sword, the famine, the noisome beasts, and the pestilence—and tells them, with fourfold repetition, that even the presence together in the city of such great saints as Noah, Daniel, and Job, could not save the city from its punishment.

And yet this awful chapter ends with words of hope and consolation, with the assurance that a faithful remnant shall be brought forth; and that these by their lives shall justify God in His dealings with the nation, and shall comfort those that are left concerning the evils brought upon Jerusalem; for that all shall know and confess that God has not punished without a cause, that God has not punished without mercy.

This gracious promise meets a difficulty which men have felt at all times, and perhaps never more than in our own day, when they see the misery and suffering which sin has brought upon the world, and are tempted to doubt either God's justice or God's goodness, and to ask, If He be so just, how can He allow the innocent to suffer with the guilty, often *for* the guilty? If He be so good, how can He allow such pain, and misery, and disappointment?

The answer given in the last verse of this chapter is, that a time shall come when the remnant shall be brought forth, that is God's saints, and their holy lives shall be manifested; and that then all shall know that what God has done in the punishment of sin has been just; as God says, through Ezekiel, "Ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done . . . saith the Lord."

If we are asked, When will this time be? we can only reply that God is justified in His saints now partially, but that He will be completely justified at the Day of Judgment, when their lives will vindicate God's justice, and the punishment of sin will be seen to be its necessary consequence, and therefore really self-inflicted.

II. With this introduction, let us turn to the text—repeated no less than four times, once after the prophecy of each of God's judgments upon Jerusalem—"Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness." Why are these saints specially selected? Many reasons have been suggested, but there are two which are especially evident.

1. They were each of them men who preserved their integrity amid a corrupt world, and were saved the ruin which fell upon others. Noah, in the corruption which preceded the flood, was a preacher of righteousness. He did not allow the evil which he saw around him to lead him astray. He stood alone against it. And, though his preaching was unavailing with others, he and his family were saved from the ruin which overtook those who rejected God's message.

Job, in a lesser degree, stood alone in his generation, and was saved from the destruction which overwhelmed his sons and daughters, and his servants.

Daniel was an example, chosen from their own times, of a man whom they all knew, who again and again had shown the courage of a hero in standing firm to his convictions of truth and right, and who had won the respect and esteem even of the heathen among whom he lived, and against whom he doubtless often had to take a stand.

2. Obviously, a second reason why these three men were selected is to call our attention to the power of intercession. Great, indeed, is the power of prayer. Many are the wonders which it has accomplished. And we are especially admonished to pray for one another, being assured that "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."[1]

Besides, a special efficacy attaches to united prayer; for

[1] S. James v. 16.

our Lord tells us that "where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them."[1] But here were three of God's greatest saints; and so corrupt had Jerusalem become, that Ezekiel is inspired to reveal that even the intercession of these three great saints together would not avail to save the city.

This does not imply that the intercession of the saints is of no value—quite the contrary. The argument is, that, great as would be the efficacy of their prayers, yet there is a limit to the power of all intercession, and that limit had been reached in the case of Jerusalem; for the perverse will of God's chosen people in rejecting His service, and in hardening their hearts against His call to penitence, had put them beyond the reach of the intercession even of God's greatest saints.

Each of these men by his righteousness had been permitted to save others. Noah had been allowed to save his own family, numbering seven persons besides himself, from the flood. Daniel, by his holiness and wisdom, was probably largely instrumental in bringing about that change of character in the Jewish exiles which prepared them for their return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city. And Job was especially directed to make intercession for his three friends, with the promise that his prayers for them would be accepted.[2]

But while these three men, whose power with God was remarkable, could not, even had they all united in intercession, have saved Jerusalem from its doom, yet we are distinctly told that they could have saved their own souls by their righteousness. From this we learn that a man's personal holiness will always serve as a shield for himself, and that a really righteous man, though placed in circumstances of grievous temptation, and surrounded by dangers of every kind, can, through God's help, stand firm, and preserve his own soul from contamination.

[1] S. Matt. xviii. 20. [2] Job xlii. 8.

So it was with Lot in Sodom; with Noah at the flood; with the three holy children and Daniel in Babylon; and with Job among his unbelieving kinsmen.

We may learn, then, the oft-repeated lesson, that religious privileges imply religious responsibilities; that if the Jewish nation could claim that it belonged especially to GOD, that very claim involved something on its part, namely, faithful service of GOD; since GOD'S promises are conditional on our fulfilment of His laws. We cannot say we belong to GOD, and claim His protection, when we are rebelling against His commands and neglecting His service.

We are further taught that we must not trust to the holiness of others to plead for us. A husband cannot plead his wife's goodness, or a son his mother's sanctity. We must work out our own salvation individually. Then shall we not only be secure ourselves, but often able also to help others.

Sermon CVI.

THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS.

(The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. LUKE XIX. 20, 21.

"And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow."

THE setting of this parable must have come home to His hearers with peculiar force, since no less than two of their noblemen, Herod and Archelaus, had literally gone from Jericho—where our Lord was when He spoke the parable—to Rome, to receive the kingdom

from Cæsar; and one of these two noblemen, Archelaus, had rebuilt the royal palace at Jericho, under the very shadow of which the Speaker and His hearers were, perhaps, at that moment standing.

I. We cannot but be struck with the resemblance between this parable and that of the talents, recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of S. Matthew. Yet they are undoubtedly different parables, spoken on different occasions, and inculcating different lessons. In the parable of the talents the groundwork is the difference of the gifts with which God endows men; in that of the pounds it is precisely the opposite —the equality of the gifts, each servant receiving one pound.

Again, in the parable of the talents the results of the trading in which the servants had engaged correspond precisely with the gifts. The man who had committed to him five talents gained five other talents. The man who had two gained two more. While in the parable of the pounds the results of trading vary according to the diligence of the recipients. All start alike with the same capital, one pound. Out of this pound one makes ten, or one thousand per cent. Another makes five, or five hundred per cent.

In the parable of the talents we are taught that God, in His judgment, takes into account man's gifts, and that responsibility is according to ability. The man who has but two talents is not required to make five, but only two more.

The parable of the pounds, however, teaches us that there is some common gift bestowed upon all, though it be but a small gift; for the man who had the pound had but little capital, compared with the man who had the talent; for the pound was worth in our money £4;[1] while the talent was worth £240.

[1] There is much difference of opinion concerning the value, in our money, of the pound and the talent. I have followed the view set forth by Dr. Kennedy, in Hasting's "Dictionary of the Bible."

The lessons, therefore, of the two parables are clearly quite different, although they are mutually complementary, one showing that to whom much is given, of him much will be required; the other, that each one will be rewarded according to his work.

There is a good deal of difference of opinion amongst commentators in regard to what a pound signifies. It is evidently some gift common to all, and therefore to be distinguished from the costlier gift in the parable of the talents; for the talents were given in differing proportions, while one pound was given to each servant. Many suggestions have been made, some taking the pound for the knowledge of God, or for grace, or for opportunity. But it is certainly not true to say, of the knowledge of God, or of opportunity, that it is given equally to all Christians. And while, in a sense, the same grace is given to all, yet the measure in which it is given surely varies.

It seems best, therefore, to take the pound as representing the common privileges of Christianity; the same Lord, the same faith, the same Sacraments, offered to all men. And the lesson of the parable is, that this common gift depends for its development, and therefore for its value, upon the diligence of the recipient. The gifts are like the seed in the parable of the sower. They contain possibilities of great development; but they cannot develop of themselves. The seed depends upon congenial soil and diligent husbandry. And here the increase of the pound depends on industry and faithfulness in trading with it; for the word rendered "occupy" (*πραγματεύσασθε*) in the clause "Occupy till I come," really means "trade," do business with this pound till I come for an accounting of it.

II. We have in this life three spheres in which we can trade; the sphere of our own nature, the sphere of the world in which we are placed—that is, of our environment—and the sphere of religion, or the service of God.

1. There is, first, our own nature to be cultivated and developed. All those various natural gifts with which we are endowed by God are to be traded with, are to be improved and increased. Unruly passions are to be brought into control, evil tendencies are to be checked, and Christian virtues to be cultivated. And to do this, we are to use the pound committed to us. We are to bring to bear upon all these things the influence of Christianity. Everything is to be brought into subjection to the law of Christ. And this is to be accomplished by the use of grace.

2. Then there is the sphere of our little world; what we might call, perhaps, the society in which we move. We must so trade with our pound that the world may be better and richer for our life, that others may be brought to God by our example, and none may be able to lay at our door the charge of having led them astray.

3. Lastly, but by no means least, there is the sphere of religion, the cultivation of our spiritual nature, that it may learn to hold constant communion with God. We are to use the gifts of Christianity to enable us to know God and His revelation to man; to love God because He first loved us; and to serve Him diligently and joyfully all the days of our life.

III. The parable closes with a portrayal of the results of a useless life. Of the ten servants, three are brought before us as examples. The one who has been most diligent in his trading has gained ten pounds, another has gained five. But there is one who has gained nothing, who kept the pound laid up in a napkin. This man is called a "wicked" servant. And we are taught that a wasted life, a useless life, is in God's sight a wicked life.

The responsibility which we assume in becoming Christians is not merely to abstain from doing evil; but rather a responsibility to do good, to be of use, to trade with the pound

which God has entrusted to us. And if we fail in this, even though we have committed no grievous sins, we shall be classed with the wicked; for "The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and all the people that forget* God." [1] No revelation in the Gospels is clearer than this. The sinner may repent and be forgiven; but the man who has wasted his life, neglected his opportunity, will hear the sentence, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, . . . Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me." [2]

But what is the result to the man himself? The pound is taken away from him, and given to the one who had ten pounds. This is just; for the man with ten pounds has shown his ability to use what is entrusted to him and to increase it; while the man from whom it is taken has proved his inability to make any use of it whatever. The pound wrapped up in a napkin is of no use to him or to anyone else. Indeed, the very word translated "napkin" (σουδαρίῳ) indicates the idleness of this man's life; for the sudarium was a handkerchief used for wiping the perspiration from the face when working. But, as this man did not work, he used his handkerchief to wrap up the pound, because he did not need it for its proper purpose.

But not only is the judgment just; like all God's judgments it is but the working out of a necessary law; for powers which are not used are gradually withdrawn, even in this life. The muscle which is never exercised becomes atrophied; the eye which never sees light loses the power of vision; the mind which is not cultivated becomes dwarfed. To him that hath is given; from him that hath not, even that he hath is taken away.

Not only do we have in this parable, strikingly portrayed, the outcome of a wasted life, of unused talents; but this awful

[1] Psalm ix. 17. [2] *Cf.* S. Matt. xxv. 41, 45.

but common result is traced to one of its frequent causes, wrong views in regard to God. The servant explained why he had not used his pound. He said, "Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow."

His views of his Lord were altogether false, and they represent his views of God. He regarded God as a Being to be feared, not loved, and not only as extreme to mark what is amiss, but even unjust in His exactions. "Thou takest up that Thou layedst not down, and reapest that Thou didst not sow." Hence, having wrong ideas of God, which implies wrong views of religion, he wastes his opportunities and ruins his life.

How often it is so! Men have wrong views of God, and therefore they cannot love God; and because they do not love Him; they do not serve Him, for love is the great motive of service, the great incentive to work for God. They fear God, not with the spirit of holy fear, but with the spirit of terror; and because they fear Him thus they often make their own lives miserable, and fail in using God's grace, and so obtaining His salvation.

We have some very important teaching in regard to this in the eighteenth Psalm, "With the merciful Thou wilt shew Thyself merciful; with an upright man Thou wilt shew Thyself upright; with the pure Thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward Thou wilt shew Thyself froward."[1]

The conception which each has of God depends largely upon a man's character, upon the atmosphere with which he surrounds his life. To the pure man God is infinitely holy; to the just man God is absolutely just; to the merciful man God is All-merciful; while to the froward God seems like himself, froward.

[1] Psalm xviii. 25. 26.

We see the sun through the medium of the atmosphere, with the result that the sun appears very different at different times. When the forest fires have filled the atmosphere with minute particles given off by the burning wood, the sun looks like a ball of fire. But we know that there is no change in the sun. The change is in the medium through which we behold it.

So it is with God. Every man's conception of God is coloured by the medium through which alone he can know God, and that medium is his own character.

False views of God, leading to false views of life, paralyze effort, and end too often, as in the parable, in the non-use or misuse of God's best gifts to man, and therefore in the failure of man's life.

Sermon CVII.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF OFFICE.

(The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.)

EZEKIEL XXXIV. 10.

"Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require My flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them."

IN ancient times, as we find in Homer, it was customary to liken the people of a nation to sheep, and their rulers and leaders to shepherds. And there can be no doubt that in the beautiful chapter of Ezekiel which forms our Old Testament Lesson to-day, the shepherds referred to and denounced by God are not so much the priests and prophets of Israel, as its kings and princes.

The Responsibility of Office.

The most ancient title for "ruler" used by the primitive race which preceded the Chaldeo-Assyrians, and which is found on the oldest monuments in cuneiform character, is a monogram, which in the Assyrian language was rendered by a word meaning a "shepherd." And Berosus tells us of a tradition that Alorus, the first king in the world, received from the Divinity the title of "Shepherd." In the earliest epic poetry of the Greeks also we find that the ordinary name for the kings or leaders of the host was "Shepherds of the people." So that it becomes clear that Ezekiel, under the title of "shepherds," is not so much denouncing the unfaithfulness of the ecclesiastics of his day, as condemning the kings and princes of Judah, who, as the distress and misery of the people increased with the oppression of the Babylonian kings, themselves exacted more and more of their subjects, and lavished more on personal luxury and display.

The first ten verses of the chapter are a scathing criticism of the faithless shepherds of Israel; the next six, a description of God's care for His people as their true Shepherd. This passes into a prophecy of the Messianic Kingdom, which carries us in thought to our Lord's allegory of the Good Shepherd in S. John's Gospel. By putting these parts together we obtain the negative and positive sides of the duty of a shepherd or ruler.

And while, as we have shown, the title in its primary sense refers to kings and great leaders, yet by implication it may be taken for all who hold office, whether secular or ecclesiastical. So that from this chapter we may learn something of the duties and responsibilities of those who are in authority.

Surely this is a lesson not un-needed in days when, throughout the world, true patriotism and unselfish statesmanship are rare, and the interest and advancement of self are the most

prominent features in the life and character of office-holders of every class.

This was so in a very marked degree among the kings both of Judah and Israel. Of Judah we are told that only three were perfect before God. David, the shepherd king, was the ideal ruler. But only two others, Hezekiah and Josiah, really strove to follow in his steps. While, as the kingdom drew to its close, the rulers became more and more depraved, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah being among the worst. Jeremiah, who prophesied at Jerusalem, shows us that this repudiation of the duties and responsibilities of office was not confined to kings, but was shared alike by prophets and priests, and was the cause of the calamities which befel the nation.[1]

I. In considering the responsibilities of office, we must have in mind the source from which all authority flows. From every point of view that source is God Himself; for when S. Paul makes the statement, "The powers that be are ordained of God," he deduces it from the primary truth, "There is no power but of God."[2] And in both these passages we must understand by power, not force, but authority. So that we might paraphrase S. Paul's words thus: There is no authority but God's authority; and therefore all authority is constituted by God.

This is true, because God's providence so orders the circumstances of individuals in this world, as practically to determine who shall be in positions of authority. A man may be an office-holder by the votes of his constituents, or by the accident of birth; but it is God's providence that permits it.

Then, too, the gifts of mind and advantages of circumstance which enable us to hold positions of authority, are bestowed upon us by God. So that a thoughtful ruler, whether called to the highest or lowest office, will recognize that the authority

[1] Jer. v. 31. [2] Rom. xiii. 1.

entrusted to him comes ultimately from GOD, and that he must, therefore, be responsible to GOD for its use or abuse.

We are reminded by the Prophet that GOD can at any time remove the unfaithful servant, and that He will do so if it seem good to Him; for we read, "I will . . . cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more." In how many ways rulers are overthrown—by a battle lost, by a political revolution, or by an early death!

And then, there is the account to be given, "I will require My flock at their hand." For the talents committed to their charge each office-holder must answer to GOD. And if the punishment for wasted talents be great, how much greater will be the penalty for tyrannous or selfish misuse of authority entrusted to him.

II. The duties of an ideal ruler are described in the latter part of the chapter, where GOD assumes the title of "Shepherd" for Himself, and afterwards foretells the setting up of the Kingdom of the Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ. We will notice in passing only three of them.

1. First, the seeking out of the sheep who are scattered. It is not enough for us to be content to deal with the needs of those only who are brought into direct contact with us. If we realize our responsibility, we shall seek out the miserable and outcast, even though their condition be the result of their own fault or folly. We shall strive to deliver them, and to gather them back into the flock over which we have the care.

This is a duty which pertains to every kind of authority—the authority of a king over his subjects. If he be a good king, he will not be contented merely to know the condition of the rich and powerful who form his court, but he will be interested in the welfare of the meanest and poorest of his subjects. He is a king, not of a class, but of a nation, and as a kingly

shepherd he will seek out (as God says by Ezekiel) the sheep that are scattered.

The same law holds good of the authority of a priest in his parish; of a great land owner on his estates; and to come down, perhaps, to the smallest and yet most sacred authority, of a father in his family.

2. The next duty mentioned is to feed the flock. God says, "I will feed them in a good pasture." This does not only mean feeding of the body, but of the mind and of the soul. A ruler must care for the temporal needs of his people, that they are fed and housed as regards their bodies, that they are educated with respect to their minds; that the food of the intellect be good food; for if bad literature be disseminated in a kingdom, the seeds of anarchy and sedition will be sown. And, lastly, he should care for the souls of his people, that they should have the Food of Heaven, the Bread of Life—Christ. And remember that this applies to each ruler in his own office and position, to the king ruling from his throne a great kingdom, down to the father in his household ruling his children and servants.

3. The last duty we shall notice is that of protecting those under our care. God says, "I will cause them to lie down," that is, in security. And "I will bind up that which is broken and will strengthen that which is sick." Here we have brought before us the tender ministries of a good ruler, that he is not only to bring back the scattered among his people, not only to feed, and house, and protect, but that he is to relieve sickness and disease, whether of body, or mind, or soul. How beautiful is this description of the work of a good shepherd!

III. Lastly, our attention is drawn to some of the sins of a bad ruler.

1. His principal sin is generally selfishiness. He rules for his own benefit, not for the benefit of those who are entrusted

to his care. His desire is for his own self-advancement, not for their happiness and prosperity. So Ezekiel says, "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?"

2. The next fault is the neglect of the flock. The bad ruler grudges time and thought to the work of his office, and so neglects his duties. As Ezekiel says, "The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost."

3. A further fault is that of positive oppression and cruelty. Ezekiel says of the shepherds of Israel, "Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock . . . but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them."

A careful study of this morning's lesson will be helpful to all who are in authority; for they will learn from it the awful Source from which authority comes, no other than God Himself; the great responsibility which it involves; the strict account which will be required by God; and the terrible penalty which will follow both the non-use and misuse of authority.

Sermon CVIII.

NICODEMUS.

(The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. JOHN III. 1, 2.

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from GOD: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except GOD be with him."

THE history of Nicodemus recorded by S. John is deeply interesting and most important. It is interesting, as an example of our Lord's method of dealing with a representative man, with a typical class. It is important, on account of its clear, dogmatic teaching in regard to the absolute necessity of regeneration as the primary condition of spiritual life.

I. Nicodemus was a favourable example of his class. He was a rich man, in a position of considerable worldly influence, a learned man, a religious man, a member of the Sanhedrim, an upright man; one of the best examples of the ancient religion, in which was bound up at that time the political life of the nation. His conscience had been touched by Christ's teaching; he was a sincere man and open to conviction, and yet with the prejudices of his class. But the weak point in his character was a timidity, amounting to moral cowardice.

He is unwilling to take a stand which will jeopardize his position among men of his own rank in life. The new religion which Christ has come to teach has touched his conscience; but it is unpatriotic, it is impolitic, and it is unpopular—at least, with the upper classes; for our Lord's followers were

only the poor and unlearned—Galilæan peasants and fishermen—who were looked upon with contempt by men who, like Nicodemus, were rulers of the Jews.

Nicodemus, however, cannot ignore Christ's teaching, and dare not reject it; though to accept it fully, and to range himself on the side of Christ, involves a sacrifice greater than he is prepared for. He will, therefore, attempt a compromise. He will try to obtain some concession from our Lord in consideration of his position as one of the great ones of the nation, some concession by which he may retain his position, and yet receive the benefits of the new teaching.

So Nicodemus comes to our Lord by night. He wants to be instructed. He has many questions he desires answered. He wishes to be in some sense a disciple of Christ, but a secret disciple. To sit at our Lord's feet openly, to recognize Christ as his Teacher in the sight of men, would at once cause him to lose not only his prestige, but his very position in the Sanhedrim. He wishes to retain the good things of this world, without forfeiting the better things of Christ's kingdom.

This moral cowardice, which is the weak spot in a character otherwise lovable and true, for three years robs his life both of its happiness and its usefulness. The secret disciple of Christ could not have been happy, moving continually among Christ's enemies, and fearing lest at any moment his religious convictions should be discovered by them. And his life could have been of little use to the cause of Christ, since he had to keep his light most carefully hidden under a bushel, and could only steal out at night to receive instruction from his Master.

There must have been times when his position was intolerable. S. John shows us one of these.[1] The chief priests and Pharisees had sent to seize Christ, and their officers came back without their Prisoner, saying, "Never man spake like this

[1] *Cf.* S. John vii. 45-53.

Man." The Pharisees turned angrily upon them, and asked, "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed."

Nicodemus here feebly interposes with a protest—"Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" He does not venture to range himself upon the side of Christ, to tell his compeers that he has investigated the teaching and found it true, that he is a disciple himself. To their challenge, "Have any of the rulers believed on Him?" he does not venture to reply, Yes, I believe in Him. He only interposes a feeble remonstrance, a plea for fair play, "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?"

The other members of the Sanhedrim recognize the weakness of the man, and contemptuously ask, "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." And Nicodemus is silent. He does not dare to say, Yes, I am a believer in this man.

Again, when our Lord is taken down from the Cross to be laid in the tomb, Nicodemus comes, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes;[1] but not till another of his own order, Joseph of Arimathæa, had set the example by boldly begging the Body of Jesus, that he might lay it in his own new tomb. The Preacher's death had effected what His life did not accomplish; and Nicodemus, who had feared to range himself by the side of the living Christ, stands sadly and reverently by the dead Body of the Master Whom he had not dared openly to confess while He was alive.

II. But we must return to the narrative of our Lord's first intercourse with Nicodemus. The Jewish ruler addresses Christ with respect, but with patronage. He gives Him the

[1] *Cf.* S. John xix. 39.

title "Rabbi." He accepts His miracles, and he traces them to divine power. But there is a latent presumption, perhaps in the words, "*We know* that Thou art a Teacher come from God," and there seems an attitude of patronage in them. He, a ruler, a rabbi, recognizes Christ as also a rabbi, but nothing more.

Our Lord does not answer his words, but his thoughts. And, indeed, we must remember that the account of the conversation is certainly greatly abbreviated, and only the most important points noticed. He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Our Lord does not want his *patronage*, but his *soul*. So He begins at once with a dogmatic statement of tremendous import. It is as though He would say, You cannot be saved as you are, even though you are a ruler in Israel. You must be born again. In your present condition you do not possess the faculties which can enable you to see the kingdom of God, and they can only be obtained by a new birth.

Nicodemus answers, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" The question of Nicodemus is not a mere cavil, as some have supposed, but goes to the very root of the difficulty of faith. How can a man be changed, being, as he is, both physically and morally, the product of many forces in the past? His character is the resultant of all the forces which have acted upon him from the first moment of his conscious life, as his body is the development from the embryo of certain physical forces which have gradually built up the organism of his physical nature, which, in its strength and in its weakness, in its perfection and in its disease, manifests the history of its past. It is almost as great a miracle to be born again spiritually, morally, in character, as it is to be born again physically. It is almost as difficult to conceive of a man's

character being changed when he is old, as to conceive of his entering the second time into his mother's womb, and being born.

How does our Lord answer this tremendous question? In one way He does not answer it. In another He does. He does not explain the *process*, but He does point out the *means*. He does not explain *how* the change of the new birth takes place, in the sense of describing the process through which man passes. Indeed, He likens it to the wind, which "bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." That is to say, He implies that the process is not for man to know. But He most clearly points out the means—"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of GOD."

By Baptism man is born, at the same moment, of water and the Spirit; not, as our Bible reads, of water and *of* the the Spirit, as though the two could be separated; but, as the original has it, he is born *out of* water and Spirit, that birth taking place at a definite moment of time, like his natural birth, and being the result of a definite Sacrament, the Sacrament of Baptism.

While the process cannot be understood, its effect can be seen. You cannot see the wind, but you can see its effects in the dust cloud, in the pointing of the weather-cock. You can "hear the sound thereof."

So, while you cannot see the new birth at the moment of baptism, you can see its effects in the Christian life. And one of its effects, not before the world, but in the consciousness of the regenerate man himself, is the power of seeing the kingdom of GOD, the gift of the power of faith, by which he is able to grasp what the unaided natural intellect could never have apprehended, the things which pertain to the kingdom

of God. He who is born of water and Spirit has entered the kingdom of God, and he sees all things from within, sees their perfection, their harmony, their beauty.

Having made known to Nicodemus the primary conditions of spiritual life, the gift of the new birth, Christ goes on to instruct him in the Incarnation,[1] in the Atonement,[2] and in the personal claims of Christ as the Source of life, and love, and light.[3]

But we must bring our discourse to a close. There are many like Nicodemus now, who in their hearts feel the force of the Church's claims, but are afraid openly to confess their faith in the Church. They are mostly the rich and powerful of this world, and they often come secretly to patronize the Church, expecting some sort of a compromise, some sort of a concession made to their exalted position. In the presence of the world they often make a feeble plea for fair play for men who are persecuted, but who in their hearts they believe to be in the right, and by whose side they would take their stand, if it were not for moral cowardice.

Christ shows us how to deal with such men, that we are not to water down the truth to their cowardice, but to teach them plainly, that there is only one standard of faith and morals for rich and poor in the Church of Christ; that there can be no compromises, no concessions, made to rank or wealth.

What a grief it must have been to Nicodemus for the rest of his days, to remember that he had not more boldly stood by Christ during His lifetime. How much he might have done to have shown his love! He might have used his wealth, as Mary used the box of ointment of Spikenard to anoint her Lord's Body. But he waited until it was too late; too late, that is, to minister to his Master on earth. And all that was left to him was to carry on his Master's work; and this, by the

[1] S. John iii. 13. [2] iii. 14. [3] iii. 15-22.

mercy of GOD, was granted to him. In spite of his weakness, in spite of his cowardice, he was really converted at the Cross, and doubtless abandoned his position, and distributed his wealth among the poor, and enrolled himself among those who openly followed Christ.

It would, however, be a very rash thing for any man, like Nicodemus, to put off openly confessing Christ in the hope that some day he might have courage to do it. Nicodemus had not the Holy Ghost to strengthen him in his weakness, to help him to overcome his cowardice. We have the Holy Ghost given us in baptism, and are therefore without excuse if, after we have felt the power of Christ's call, the truth of Christ's claims, we hesitate or put off the obedience of faith, the confession of Christ.

Sermon CIX.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S IMAGE.

(The Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.)

DANIEL III. 16-19.

"O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our GOD Whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

THE scene in the plain of Dura has an interest of its own, as exhibiting, with striking suggestiveness, a drama of human life.

Nebuchadnezzar apparently brings to a close an epoch of military success, and ushers in a period of national peace and prosperity, by the erection, in the plain of Dura,

of an image of gold of colossal proportions. It is not necessary to assume that the image itself was sixty cubits in height; for this would probably include the pedestal or pillar upon which it stood; and, according to the practice of the times, a golden image meant an image overlaid with gold, not one of solid metal.

The plain of Dura was probably within the precincts of Babylon itself, so that the inhabitants would always have the image within sight. There is some dispute amongst commentators as to whether the image was a representation of Nebuchadnezzar himself, or of his "magnified royalty"; or whether it represented Bel, to whom the king ascribed all his success and greatness. Whichever way we take it, it suggests the worship of a great "world-power"; for it commemorated the greatness of the king and his martial successes, his conquest of many nations, his overthrow of many cities. And the worship of the image symbolized the worship of the spirit of worldliness.

I. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to give any exhaustive definition of worldliness. But I think we shall agree that, whatever be our definition, worldliness is fittingly represented by the worship of an image of gold; the worship of money, or of success; of popularity, of power; of all those things which gold can buy.

The world is ever setting up new idols for men to worship. But, while the idol itself is new, the power which it represents is the old spirit of worldliness. It manifests itself in new ways, in new fashions, in new opinions. Society from time to time erects a new idol, as it tires of the old one. And even religion, that is, worldly religion, as distinguished from the true worship of God, loves continually to invent some new sect, to set up some new idol to represent its latest fad.

Then the world goes to work to seduce men to worship its idol. And to do this it employs many attractions, and, where

they fail, threatens the direst penalties. Both are well set forth in this case by the circumstances which are connected with the worship of Nebuchadnezzar's image.

But to take, first, the attractions. The image itself was exceedingly magnificent, of majestic size; and overlaid with gold it glittered in the sunlight. Its worship was exceedingly fashionable. Royalty commanded it; the aristocracy sanctioned it; art and literature were on its side. The crowd on the plain of Dura must have been most brilliant; and then the strains of music were most sensuous and exciting. And doubtless there were priests with a gorgeous ceremonial to make the service impressive.

How like the methods which the world uses now to seduce men to worldliness! While we cannot confine the spirit of worldliness to any one form of manifestation, there is generally associated with it a glitter which appeals to the sensuous side of our nature. The powers that be, kings or governors, with their courts; the triumphs of art and literature; music and æstheticism; are generally on the side of the world. Then, too, public opinion; to do as all men do—"all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up." And only three, who were Jewish captives, dared to refuse to bend the knee.

Again, the world professes to be contented with outward recognition of its authority, and offers to leave each man free as to his own private opinions so long as he conforms to what the world demands. It has been thought that when Nebuchadnezzar said to the three Jews, "Do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?" a distinction may be seen between serving the gods and worshipping the image, the former implying interior worship, the latter only the outward fulfilment of the king's demand; so that Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abed-nego might have fallen down and worshipped the image without in their hearts recognizing the gods of Nebuchadnezzar. The world will try to make it easy for men to be worldly, by supplying arguments to salve or drug their consciences, with the belief that, in doing as the world does, in accepting the externals of worldliness, they can keep their hearts and souls true to GOD.

But where attractions and arguments fail, the world threatens the direst penalties. If the great crowd in the plain of Dura worshipping the splendid image, and the sensuous excitement of the music, and the brilliant services fail to win the young Hebrews, then there is the awful penalty of the fiery furnace into which they are to be cast.

If the world cannot win us by fair means, it will by foul. If you *will* set yourself against the world, disregarding its maxims, and rebelling against its authority, then the world will make you suffer for it. And there are many punishments which the world can inflict. It can ostracise you from Society; ridicule you as being straitlaced, prudish, behind the times, and with some it can threaten the far more awful vengeance of poverty! The merchant who will not accept the world's code of morality and honour, who will not misrepresent the value of his goods, or adopt sharp tricks of trade, sometimes has to face as the alternative, the loss of his business, and finally to face poverty, not only for himself, but for those whom he loves better than himself—his wife and children. The world can threaten serious penalties for those who defy it.

II. As the scene in the plain of Dura brings before us the methods by which the world strives, either by its attractions to seduce men to worship its idols, or by its threats to reduce them to subjection; so the conduct of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, teaches us how the world is to be met and overcome. Their answer to the king shows no sign of wavering

faith or weakening courage. They are offered time for consideration; but they answer with fearless promptness and unhesitating decision, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter"; or, as the translation should be, We have no need to answer thee; that is, GOD Himself will answer thee. For they go on to say, "Our GOD Whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace." They show that their action is based upon absolute faith in GOD's Omnipotence. GOD can deliver them. About this they are certain. And they add, "He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." In these words they manifest their trust in GOD.

But, while there can be no doubt about GOD's power, they are not sure whether the highest ends of righteousness may best be served by their suffering or their deliverance. So they simply submit themselves to GOD's Will, whether it be that they should live or die. For they add, "If it be not so," that is, if it be not GOD's Will to deliver us, for some wise purpose of His own, then, "be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

It is always wrong to sin, but it is not wrong to suffer, and, if need be, to die, rather than sin. So they set an example of fearless determination to do their duty, and leave the issue, the consequences, whether for life or death, in the hands of GOD.

The penalty which Nebuchadnezzar threatened was promptly inflicted. They were cast into the fiery furnace. But the result was not what either they or the king expected. Two things happened. The angel of GOD's Presence was with them in the furnace, consoling and strengthening them, and the fire lost its power to injure them. The last effect was caused by the first. It was GOD's Presence which deprived the fire of its power to hurt them.

We may learn a valuable lesson from this; that when GOD

does not save us from falling into trouble, because it is either for our good, or for His glory, that the trouble should come upon us, He can deprive the trouble of its power to hurt us. In this case GOD did not prevent the king's command from being carried out, did not stop the officers from casting the Jews into the fire; but He did deliver His servants from being harmed by the fire.

It is often GOD'S Will to *deliver* us in trouble, rather than to *save* us from trouble. It is often for our spiritual good that we should know the force of temptation, or the burden of trial. Therefore GOD, while allowing the temptation or trial to befall us, supplies us with grace that we may resist the temptation and bear the cross. Thus our character is developed, and GOD is glorified, through our sufferings.

The result of the faithfulness of the three young men was a miraculous manifestation which strengthened their faith, which converted, at least to some extent, the heathen king, and which doubtless greatly impressed all the spectators. The result fully justified their trust in GOD.

The lesson which this history teaches is of universal application; for, whatever be our condition of life, we are placed in a world which is ever striving to seduce us from the service of GOD to the worship of its idols. The world dresses up its idols with new clothes, and calls them by new names; but its methods are always much the same; first to attract by its pleasures or rewards; and then, when these fail, to threaten its punishments. We cannot have a nobler example of the way to overcome the world than that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. We cannot have a better answer than theirs. Our GOD can deliver us from every fiery furnace, and will deliver us, if it be according to His wise purpose; but if not, we must do our duty, and therefore cannot worship the golden image which the world sets up.

Sermon CX.

THE LIVING WATER.

(The Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.)

S. John vii. 37, 38.

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

THE events which are recorded in the seventh and eighth chapters of S. John took place at the feast of tabernacles only some six months before our Lord's death. The feast of tabernacles, as Josephus tells us, was the "holiest and greatest" of the Jewish festivals. It was instituted to commemorate the wanderings in the wilderness, and also to render thanks to God for all the blessings of the harvest. Both Pentecost and the feast of tabernacles were harvest festivals. The one was the feast of the first-fruits, the other of the ingathering. It lasted seven days, to which an additional day was added. And it was upon this last and "great day" of the feast that our Lord uttered the words of my text.

We may observe that in these two chapters our Lord draws attention to the fulfilment, in His own Person, of two great types. He says in this chapter, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." And in the next He says, "I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of life." [1]

These sayings were doubtless associated in the minds of the people with two great symbolic actions which took place daily

[1] S. John viii. 12.

during the feast of tabernacles—the pouring out of the water from the pool of Siloam, and the lighting of the great candelabras which burned in the court of the women in the Temple.

These two actions symbolized the flow of water, at Moses' command, from the rock in the wilderness, to give drink to the thirsty Israelites, and the pillar of cloud and of fire by which they were guided in their journeys through the wilderness.

I. The ceremonies connected with the first were as follows:

Early in the morning, to the sound of music, a procession started from the Temple—a priest bearing a golden pitcher went first—and it made its way down the edge of the Tyropœon valley, where it meets the valley of the Kedron. Here, within the city wall, at the south-eastern angle of Jerusalem, was the pool of Siloam, fed by a spring farther up in the narrowest part of the Kedron valley. This pool was made by King Hezekiah, in order to divert from the besieging army the spring of Gihon, and to bring its waters within the city. The name "Siloam" (sent) signifies a conduit. From the waters of the pool of Siloam the priest filled his golden pitcher, except on the Sabbath and on the first day of the feast, when the water was provided the day before.

Then the procession went back to the Temple, reaching it just as the priests were laying the pieces of the sacrifice on the great altar of the burnt offering at the close of the ordinary morning service. A threefold blast of the priests' trumpets welcomed the procession as it passed through the water gate into the court of the priests.

At this point another priest who carried the wine for the drink offering joined the one with the golden pitcher, and the two together ascended the rise of the altar and turned to the left. Here there were two silver funnels with narrow openings leading down to the base of the altar. Into that at the

east the wine was poured, and at the same time the water into the western opening. Immediately after the pouring of water the great Hallel (consisting of Psalms cxiii. to cxviii. inclusive) was chanted.[1]

As we have said, the feast of tabernacles, when the people dwelt in booths, was primarily intended to commemorate their sojourn in the wilderness, and GOD'S care of them there; and the ceremony of the libation of the water from Siloam was to remind the people of GOD'S goodness to them when they were in danger of perishing from thirst.

So that when our Lord, on the last great day of the feast, stood and cried (that is, in a manner to attract attention), "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," the minds of the people would be carried, first, to the miraculous gift of water from the rock in the wilderness, then to the Scriptural promise, more than once repeated, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." [2]

Our Lord by His words shows clearly that the type and promise are fulfilled in His Person; and S. Paul, referring to the same event in the wilderness, boldly says, that the Rock of which the Israelites of old drank in the wilderness was Christ.[3]

There can be little doubt as to the exact moment when our Lord uttered these words. It was just as the ceremony of the libation of the water had been completed. He did not interrupt the service, but at the moment of its fulfilment He interpreted and explained its meaning in these words, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." And He further promised

[1] This description of the ceremony is abbreviated from Edersheim's "Life and Times of Jesus, the Messiah," Vol. II., pp. 157-159.

[2] Isaiah xii. 3; *cf.* also xliv. 3. [3] *Cf.* 1 Cor. x. 4.

that the water of grace which He would give would not only satisfy the thirst of him who drank, but would flow forth from him as a river of living water, refreshing and satisfying other souls.

II. S. John himself here adds a note in his Gospel, that all Christians may understand to what gift Christ refers; for he says, "But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

Our Lord, therefore, interprets the ceremony, and S. John explains that His interpretation refers to the gifts of the Spirit which Christ was to send upon His Church after His ascension into heaven.

Water is one of the great types of the Holy Ghost, and especially brings before us His office as the Giver and Sustainer of Life.

In the history of creation as given in the first chapter of Genesis, the first animate life is from the waters on the fifth day—"And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life."[1] Science, too, discovers the earliest germs of life in water. The germ of spiritual life in the soul springs normally from the waters of Baptism, through the operation of the Holy Ghost. We all know too the power of water to cause the dry, parched ground to bring forth luxuriant vegetation. Man is refreshed and invigorated by a draught of water; and suspended animation is sometimes restored by water, as in the case of one in a faint.

But all this is typical of the action of the Holy Ghost, through His operations, supplying grace for man's various needs—in absolution, giving power of resurrection to those baptized souls that are dry and dead in sin; for all resurrection to life is by the operation of the Lord and Life-Giver; and

[1] Gen. i. 20.

it is He that causes the wilderness of the world to blossom as the rose, with the saints of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost is, however, not only the Life-Giver, but also the Sustainer of life. And here, again, we find in water a type of His operation; for water is not only necessary to quicken life, but to sustain it when quickened. Vegetation cannot live without the rain or dew; and man himself must die in a very few days if deprived of water. The result of drought in nature is always, if it lasts long enough, death.

Thus we again find the action of the Holy Spirit symbolized. For not only is the germ of spiritual life implanted in the soul through the waters of Baptism, by the working of the Holy Ghost, but it is He that sustains and nourishes that germ, and gives it power of growth, by waters which are brought to it through other channels of grace. The Psalmist cries, "My soul thirsteth for Thee; my flesh also longeth after Thee in a barren and dry land where no water is." [1] This world is indeed a barren and dry land for the soul, with no water except the streams of grace, and the sacramental gifts of the Church, drawn from "the wells of salvation." [2] Spiritual drought, that is, neglect of the sacraments, like natural drought, soon causes death.

Water, too, has both healing and cleansing properties. The health of a city depends not only upon good water to drink, but upon abundance of water with which to flush the city, and so to cleanse it. In this we have a type of the action of those sacraments in the spiritual life by which the soul is cleansed and healed, and those means of grace by which it is maintained in a state of spiritual health, all of them depending upon the operations of the Holy Spirit.

III. But there is a condition which must be observed if we are to obtain the life-giving Water which our Lord offers. We

[1] Psalm lxiii. 2. [2] Isaiah xii. 3.

must be thirsty. As the Prophet promises, "I will pour water upon him that is *thirsty*, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring."[1] As our Lord proclaims, "Blessed are they which do hunger and *thirst* after righteousness: for they shall be filled."[2] The living water at the feast of tabernacles was offered to those who were thirsty. "If any man *thirst*, let him come unto Me, and drink."

If we are to obtain in their fulness the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we must have a sincere appreciation of them, a very real desire for them. Is it not very often because this condition is not fulfilled, that we do not obtain in their fulness the gifts of the Holy Ghost?

We do not obtain them, because we do not value them, because we do not realize their importance; because we do not understand that our nature is dry and barren without them. If only we can realize our needs, if only we are thirsty for the gifts which Christ offers, we shall come to Him, we shall drink of the Fountain of Grace which is found in His Church. And then we shall not only be filled, but the Living Water will flow from us to refresh other souls, the grace in us will enable us to help others. It is good often to pray, "O Lord, make me thirsty for the gifts of Thy Spirit, so thirsty that I may drink and be filled with them!"

[1] Isaiah xliv. 3. [2] S. Matt. v. 6.

Sermon CXI.

DANIEL'S TRIAL.

(The Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.)

DANIEL VI. 10.

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his GOD, as he did aforetime."

N this chapter we find a change of dynasty in Babylon, but Daniel still in power. The identification of Darius the Median, who appointed Daniel one of the presidents of the kingdom, is among the unsolved problems of history. One of the latest suggestions, and perhaps the best, is that he was Gobryas of Gutium. This Gobryas was a Median; in early Aramaic writing, his name, and that of Darius, were not unlike, and he took possession of Babylon on behalf of Cyrus, and was by him made governor of Babylon. We also find in the Annals of Nabunahid that Gobryas himself appointed governors in Babylon.

I. While interesting, it is, however, of little importance to us to determine who Darius was. We know that he was at the time ruler of Babylon, and that, because he recognized the ability and integrity of Daniel, he made him one of the three presidents, and preferred him above the presidents and princes, and even "thought to set him over the whole realm." This action of Darius aroused the envy of the other presidents and princes, and they at once began to plot his downfall. They were able to find nothing of which to accuse him, either in the administration of his office, or in his own private life. They

saw that the only possible point at which they might attack him was "concerning the law of his GOD," that is, through his religious convictions.

They therefore set to work to get a law passed which they felt sure would so conflict with Daniel's view of his duty to GOD, that he would be certain to break the law. This diabolical plot they were successful in carrying out. How they persuaded Darius to enact the law is uncertain; some have thought that in proposing that prayer should be addressed only to him for thirty days they appealed to his vanity. But it is quite possible that they urged the passing of the law rather on grounds which seemed to meet certain political exigencies.

We know that during the reign of Nabunahid the policy of bringing the gods of various provinces to Babylon had tended to reduce the importance of the national religion by forming rival cults. We also know that one of the first acts of Cyrus's reign was to order the restoration of these deities to their own localities. This may have been resented by those who had learned to worship these imported deities, and there may have been considerable discontent among the heterogeneous people who went to make up the population of Babylon. We know, also, how easily a fancied slight to the religious beliefs of a people leads to a riot.

The plotters may, therefore, have represented to Darius that there was a danger of a religious uprising, and that the best way to meet the difficulty would be to order all religious worship to cease for one month. As the deity was thought to be incarnate in the king, there would be little difficulty in regard to the practical deification of himself which the decree of Darius seems to have demanded. The British Government in India forbids religious observances that are liable to cause excitement in the followers of rival creeds, though of course it does not offer such a substitute as Darius offered.

However the enactment of the law was brought about, we know that it was enacted, and that Daniel was informed of it.

II. Few, probably, in reading this chapter realize the precise character, the tremendous force, of the temptation to which Daniel was exposed. His action in meeting the crisis was so calm and courageous, his decision so unhesitating, that we are in danger of losing sight of the peculiar circumstances which made the trial so overwhelming to Daniel. To appreciate these, we must recall something of Daniel's own history; and especially we must remember what was the aim and ambition of his life.

As a youth, Daniel, on account of his attractiveness and ability, had been chosen, with three of his fellow-captives, to be trained in the wisdom of the Chaldeans, that he might be a sort of chamberlain in the king's palace. His consistent goodness, his perfect integrity, and his wise counsel, had raised him to a place of very great influence in the kingdom, and this, as we know, with no less than three different rulers, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius. There is little doubt that he welcomed and employed the influence which he had gained, not for selfish ends, but to forward the one great cause on which he had set his heart, to which he had devoted his life—the deliverance of his people—for Daniel was a true patriot as well as a devout Jew.

Amid the seductions of a luxurious court, and the surroundings of an alien faith, Daniel preserved both his morality and his religion. He lived an abstemious life, refusing the portion of the king's meat, and contenting himself with such food as the Jewish law allowed. And he carefully kept up the duties of his religion. Though far removed from the Temple, and though its services had ceased, yet he was in the habit, thrice a day, of kneeling in his chamber, with the windows open towards Jerusalem, and praying and giving thanks before his

God. That this was the habit of his life, is implied in the clause "as he did aforetime."

With the change of dynasty his hopes seemed nearing their realization; for the policy of the new ruler of Babylon towards his captive subjects was generous and liberal. Darius had already made Daniel prime minister. What might he not then accomplish with a ruler who was so well disposed to him? This we can answer by seeing what God, through him, did accomplish, in restoring the Jews to Jerusalem; for Josephus says it was through Daniel's influence with Cyrus (whose viceroy Darius probably was) that the edict was put forth permitting the Jews to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the Temple.

Now, consider well what was at stake. It was not merely that Daniel feared to lose his life, if he should break the law and offer prayer to God. Many a brave man would be willing, for his faith, to face death. Many a woman and child, strengthened by divine grace, has done so. But the trials which Daniel had to face were of quite a different kind. He was to lose all that he had laboured so hard to gain; to sacrifice, not merely his own life, but the *future of his people;* for with Daniel's downfall their hopes would be shattered.

Then, doubtless, Satan suggested to Daniel the possibility of a compromise. He might pray without kneeling. God, Who can read the heart, would understand why he did so. Or he might shut himself up in his chamber with the windows closed, where no one could see him, and kneel down and pray to his heart's content. Would this have been wrong? But what does he do?—With his windows open towards Jerusalem, in the sight of all, he calmly ignores the king's decree, and pursues his practice of daily prayer. A higher law overrides the lesser; a greater Sovereign, to Whom he owes allegiance, must be served before Darius. Daniel knows the penalty and

accepts it, but with perfect trust in GOD, knowing that GOD can take care of His own people, and bring to pass His own purposes. GOD has used Daniel, up to this time, as the instrument for bringing about those purposes; but GOD can use some other agency. So Daniel unhesitatingly decides to trust GOD and to serve GOD as in the past, even though it be at the cost of his own life.

And what is the result? Daniel is cast into the den of lions. But GOD shuts the lions' mouths, just as GOD had made the fiery furnace harmless to Daniel's three friends. Daniel trusted GOD, and GOD saved him, not *from* the trial, but *in* the trial. He did not deliver him from the danger which threatened, but He prevented the danger from hurting him.

The effect of Daniel's noble act is wide-reaching. First, it leads to a change in Darius, who recognizes the power of Jehovah, and makes a decree that in every part of his dominion "men tremble and fear before the GOD of Daniel." Then, too, his influence in the kingdom is immensely increased. And shortly after this, his heart's desire is accomplished in the restoration of his people to their own country, with permission to rebuild the Temple of GOD.

The great lesson which Daniel's life has for every one is that we should do right, and not be over-anxious about the consequences which may befall us. We are to be anxious about the consequences of evil actions. For them we are responsible. But surely, if we do right according to our light, if we obey the voice of conscience and the law of GOD, we may, with confidence, leave the consequences to ourselves and to others in GOD'S hands. Compromise in matters of right and wrong is never good, and seldom successful. To stand up boldly for what is right, trusting in GOD'S grace, may lead to serious suffering; but GOD can either deliver us from that suffering, or render it powerless to harm us; or, if not, make that suffering a blessing to us.

Sermon CXII.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

(The Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.)

S. JOHN VIII. 12.

"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

THERE are two opinions in regard to the occasion on which our Lord uttered these words, and to the incident which suggested them. Some would infer from the time-note in the second verse, "And early in the morning He came again into the temple," that it was the rising sun which suggested to our Blessed Lord the metaphor, "I am the light of the world."

Others more accurately reject this time-note, and point out that the whole of the first eleven verses of the chapter, together with the last verse of the previous chapter, (forming, as they do, the episode of the woman taken in adultery,) are an interpolation. These would recognize in our Lord's words, "I am the light of the world," a figure suggested by the illumination of the court of the women, where the words were spoken; for on the first night of the feast of tabernacles, according to the Mishnah, and on each succeeding night of the festive week, according to the Talmud, the four great golden candelabra in the court of the women were lighted.

I. These lights were themselves a memorial of the pillar of fire and cloud which guided the Israelites in their wanderings through the wilderness, just as the libation of the water from Siloam commemorated the streams which flowed from the rock. Indeed, the purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles was primarily to remind the people of that period of their nation's

history, when God led them for forty years through the wilderness, and protected them from all the dangers incidental to their wanderings.

This view, that our Lord's metaphor referred to the fiery pillar, seems strongly supported by the second half of the verse; for Christ says, "I am the light of the world: he that *followeth* Me shall not walk in darkness." Those who followed the fiery pillar when the people moved by night *did* walk in darkness. They saw the pillar moving before them, and they followed it; but darkness was all around them, and they knew not where they were going. So our blessed Lord, while likening Himself to the fiery pillar, also contrasts the light which He shall give with its light.

Indeed, as Christ in the previous chapter had taught that He had more than fulfilled the type commemorated by the pouring out of the water of Siloam, so here He claims not merely to be a light to guide the nation of Israel, but to be the Light of the whole world. And His light was to be of such a character that His followers should not walk in darkness, but should have, instead of a mechanical guide going before them, the light of life, that inward gift which should illuminate their whole nature, and should shine upon the path they trod.

II. It has been stated that in the East a customary method of directing the movements of caravans and armies was to suspend a basket of fire from a tall pole, so that at night the head of the column could be descried in spite of the darkness, and by day the smoke which would ascend from the burning basket would be discernible even at a considerable distance, where the surface of the ground was flat, and the view was not impeded by much vegetation. The pole would, of course, move with the chief who led the army or caravan.

In the case of the Israelites, God Himself was in the fire

and controlled its movements, and so led the people whither He would have them to go. When the pillar of cloud left its place the camp followed it; and during the whole of their wanderings in the wilderness their movements were thus controlled.

We must, however, remember that the Israelites were not led through the wilderness by roads which had already been made, and which were known to those who were familiar with the wilderness; but that they were led day by day, and step by step, by God Himself, Who chose a road never before trodden. In the morning the people did not know whether they were to go forward or backward, or whether they were to remain in the camp. They had to wait until the pillar moved, and follow until it halted.

How wonderfully this symbolizes our life! The world through which we pass is, for each of us, a wilderness. There are no charts in which we can study the roads by which we will travel. We do not know where we may find ourselves next week, or next month, or next year. We may make our plans; but again and again we find ourselves unable to carry them out. And often, as we look back upon the path we have travelled in life, we observe that the most apparently trifling circumstances have altered and determined our course—the making a new friend, the meeting an unforeseen obstacle, the happening upon an unexpected opportunity.

Like the Israelites, we have to trust ourselves to God's guidance, not knowing what the morrow may bring forth. We need to lay to heart our Lord's words, so often repeated, "Take . . . no thought for the morrow"[1]; that is, do not be over-anxious about it; leave it to God. All our anxiety cannot alter the morrow, or what it has in store for us; and we should prepare ourselves for meeting difficulties which await

[1] S. Matt. vi. 34.

us in the morrow by doing thoroughly our work to-day, overcoming its obstacles, and fulfilling its duties. If we do this, and seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, we can rest in the confidence that we shall be guided by infallible Omnipotence and loving Wisdom.

III. But let us now observe the *contrast* between the light which Christ gives us, and that which guided the Israelites. With them the fiery pillar was an infallible guide. But it only controlled the *movements* of the Israelites; it did not influence their conduct. They followed it blindly; they knew not where it led them, though they could trust it implicitly. Yet this following had no effect upon the *character* of those who followed it. Christ tells us that He is the Light of the world, and that they who follow Him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. In the first chapter of S. John's Gospel we read, "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." [1]

We are not merely to follow Christ as One Who goes before us, and from Whom we are separated; but rather, as possessing Christ, we are to live with His life, and His life is "the light of men." So S. Paul says, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." [2]

This light which guides us, because we possess the life of Christ, controls not merely our outward movements, but our inward character. The Israelites saw the light ahead and followed it, but darkness was all around them. But the light of Christ is within us, so that we walk not in darkness. We have light within and light around, that is, if we are living a Christlike life.

Do we not recognize within ourselves a strange paradox, the desire to be free, to guide our own life, to make our own choice, on the one hand; and on the other, the craving for an infallible

[1] S. John i. 4. [2] Gal. ii. 20.

guide to answer our questions and to solve our perplexities? This infallible guide Christ has given us in His Holy Spirit; for He promised His disciples before He left them, that when the Comforter was come, He should guide them into all truth.[1]

Yet, though the Guide is Himself infallible, we have no other means of *personally* recognizing His guidance than by identifying ourselves with the life of Christ; for GOD does not now guide us by an outward sign like the pillar of fire which every one could see, and which it was easy to follow, but which did not influence conduct nor change character.

GOD guides us now by inward enlightenment, by communicating to us His own perceptions of right and wrong, by sanctifying our character. And this guidance is of a much higher kind that the mere external leading which the Israelites possessed. It leaves us to solve many of the perplexities of our life and conduct, not by a hard and fast rule, but by certain principles which we must ourselves apply under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Such leading involves a recognition of great moral responsibility, and thus stimulates the development of character on the lines of the example which Christ has left us in His own life.

Is not this what is implied by our Lord's words, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life"? that is, the light of Christ's own life, Who is "the light of men."

This gift, typified partially by the pillar of fire in the wilderness, is no longer confined to a chosen nation, but is offered to the whole world; for S. John says of Christ, "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."[2] And this Light is appropriated by each individual in proportion as he makes the life of Christ the rule of his own life.

[1] *Cf.* S. John xiv. 26; xv. 26; xvi. 13. [2] S. John i. 9.

Sermon CXIII.

THE FRUITS OF PENITENCE.

(The Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.)

HOSEA XIV. 1.

"O Israel, return unto the Lord thy GOD."

THE strikingly beautiful chapter of Hosea which we have read in the lesson this morning is like the glorious evening of a stormy day. The preceding chapters of Hosea's Prophecy are a long series of denunciations of Israel's sins and of the punishments which they merit. The book is like one continuous storm, until suddenly in the last chapter all changes, and with the utmost tenderness GOD invites His people to repent, promising them pardon, and, under images of exquisite beauty, depicting the abundant blessings which will follow as the fruits of penitence.

So in nature, sometimes, when a storm has been raging all day in its fury, towards sunset the wind changes, the rain ceases, and the clouds disperse, revealing a glorious sunset; while a gorgeous rainbow, telling of GOD'S covenanted promise, arches the sky.

In the closing words of the prophecy the thunders of denunciation give place to gracious words of pardon and peace.

I. First, we have the call to penitence.

1. "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy GOD; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."

What a picture we have here of man's moral degradation! He has wandered away from GOD. Therefore he is invited to return. But worse—in his wanderings, sin has caused him

to stumble and fall. And how disastrous that fall has been! It has so shattered his nature, that, without GOD'S help and encouragement, he cannot return, he cannot repent.

2. So GOD points out to him the first steps in penitence, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips."

Two things GOD teaches the penitent, confession and prayer. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord." Sin must be confessed, and with the confession there must be earnest supplication—"Say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." Then will follow the praise of the penitent, "So will we render the calves of our lips."

When the penitent has the assurance of GOD'S pardon, the lips, which have sorrowfully and with shame confessed his grievous sins, will joyfully utter GOD'S praises. The "calves" referred to here in our unfortunate translation are, of course, young bulls or heifers which would be offered in sacrifice as a thank-offering. Instead of these, Hosea prophesies of the evangelical sacrifice of "praise and thanksgiving."

3. Then come the proofs of penitence, the abandonment and renunciation of the sins of the past. "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods."

The three great sins of Israel are here renounced. "Asshur shall not save us." In the time of the weak and wicked Ahaz, King of Judah, he had turned to Assyria for help against his foes; and the Assyrians, from being allies, became oppressors. Before this, in Menahem's reign, Israel had become tributary to Assyria.

In the next reign, that of Hezekiah, when Assyria threatened the kingdom, the policy of the worldly statesmen, of whom Shebna is a representative, was to seek help from Egypt.

This is referred to in the words, "We will not ride upon horses." It was from Egypt that horses for purposes of war were procured. In the reign of Hoshea, the last king of Israel, the same disastrous policy was pursued in regard to So, King of Egypt, and it resulted in the utter destruction of the Northern Kingdom.

Besides this, both kingdoms, but especially the kingdom of Israel, sinned again and again by yielding to idolatry. So, that, instead of fleeing to God for succour when enemies threatened, Israel called on Assyria to save them first, then on Egypt, and then on their false gods, on their idols. If penitence is sincere and is to win full pardon and grace for the future, all past sin must be really given up.

II. The promise of forgiveness. Thus far the Prophet has been teaching Israel how to repent. Now in God's Name, he assures them of forgiveness—"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him."

What a wonderful thing is God's forgiveness, and how little the world realizes it! Forgiveness, such as God offers to the penitent, implies not merely a changed relation to God by the removal of His anger, but an actual change in ourselves. If God is to forgive us, we must be forgiveable; since forgiveness is not the mere utterance of a sentence of acquittal from sin, but involves a real moral change in the sinner.

And this God teaches us, when He says, "I will heal their backsliding," that is, their falling away, their apostasy. The wounds which sin has left in every part of our nature, God's forgiveness heals; not all at once, but gradually. And this healing comes from His free love, "I will love them freely."

It is God's love for us which must awaken in us that love which is the only sufficient motive for true penitence. As

S. John tells us, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." [1]

It is deeply important that we should realize this—that forgiveness does not merely imply a change in God's attitude to us, but that it involves a change in ourselves. We must appropriate the grace of penitence; and if we do, that grace will heal the diseases of our soul, the wounds that sin has made.

A man who is really forgiven is indeed a new creature. Not only is the terror of God's judgments removed from his mind, but the reign of sinful habits has ceased in his soul, the bonds are broken, and the man is free. And in his freedom he must show his gratitude to God by consecrating his life to that service which is perfect freedom.

III. Lastly, the Prophet gives us a description of the fruits of penitence from God's side; that is—not the fruits of penitence which we bring forth in an amended life, but the blessings which God showers upon the truly penitent sinner. Israel was an agricultural people. And so here, as in the Prophet Isaiah, images drawn from pastoral life are used to describe the abundant blessings which God will shower upon repentant Israel.

"I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

In hot countries the dew is far heavier, and of greater importance to agriculture than with us. And so we find the dew frequently used in Holy Scripture to symbolize God's blessings, both temporal and spiritual. When Isaac blessed Jacob he said, "God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness

[1] 1 S. John iv. 10.

of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine."[1] Here the blessing invoked was chiefly a temporal one.

In the great psalm of benediction which Moses uttered before he ascended Mount Nebo to die, we find the dew used as a figure of the happiness of Israel under God's protection; for he says, "The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew."[2] And in the previous chapter he takes it as typifying teaching; for he says, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew."[3]

The Psalmist likens fraternal unity to the dew, saying, "Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is brethren to dwell together in unity! It is . . . like as the dew of Hermon, which fell upon the hill of Zion."[4] And we Christians use it as symbolizing the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the soul.

The image suggests, first, the refreshing properties of grace. As the parched earth is refreshed with dew, so our souls are refreshed by the graces which are bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit. Then, too, it has a fertilizing and fructifying power, and so is indispensable to growth. How could we grow without the operation of the Holy Ghost?

But we must not stop longer upon this image; for we shall not have time to consider the rest of the passage. After saying, "I will be as the dew unto Israel," God goes on to show the result of His blessing. "He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." Our Lord used this figure when He said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."[5]

The lily in its simple purity sets forth perfect beauty, beauty

[1] Gen. xxvii. 28. [2] Deut. xxxiii. 28. [3] Deut. xxxii. 2.
[4] Psalm cxxxiii. 1, 3. [5] S. Matt. vi. 28, 29.

unadorned, and therefore unspoiled. Solomon in all his glory, adorned with rich vestments and glittering jewels, had not the beauty of the lily. And then, both in our Lord's use of the lily as an example of beauty, and in this passage, attention is drawn to its growth—"He shall *grow* as the lily," "Consider the lilies of the field, how they *grow*." They grow, not by something added from without, but from development of their own true life within. Imperceptibly they take from the ground, from the air and the rain, all they need, and build up, according to the true law of their own nature, their perfect beauty.

So the result of God's grace to the penitent will be a development of a beauty which belongs to the soul, not merely to the outward form; a development of the powers of the inner life, not a display of worldly adornment.

To the beauty of the fragile lily is added the strength of the cedar of Lebanon. "He shall . . . cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread." Not only in the penitent soul is there a growth of the beauty of sanctity, but there is a growth which is rooted in Christ, and is therefore strong, and a fragrance of holiness which attracts and refreshes others. So the Prophet says, his smell shall be as Lebanon.

Again, the penitent who has found shelter under the arms of the Cross shall be a shelter himself to others; for Hosea says, "They that dwell under His shadow shall return."

And then, lastly, there is the promise that "they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

The greatest saints of God have generally been the greatest penitents; and the fruit with which God has endowed their souls has been, as Hosea foretold, a fruit in which they themselves had their joy, and with which they blessed the world around them.

Sermon CXIV.

THE MAN BORN BLIND.

(The Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.)

S. JOHN IX. 6, 7.

"When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing."

THIS miracle of the healing of the blind man has an importance of its own, as marking a crisis in our Lord's ministry; for it led immediately to the foundation of the new religious society of the Christian Church as distinct from Judaism. The miracle resulted in a careful investigation of the facts by the recognized leaders of the Jews, who came to an agreement, "that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." Before this our Lord's followers were in good standing in the Jewish Church. After this it was determined by the authorities that they should be excommunicated.

In the next chapter, in the allegory of the Good Shepherd, our Lord opens the door of His kingdom, proclaiming Himself to be the Good Shepherd, and to be the door by which those who entered in should be saved, and should go in and out, and find pasture.[1] This miracle, therefore, marks a turning-point in our Lord's work.

I. Let us notice, first, what precedes the miracle. Christ and His disciples pass a blind man, and the disciples ask, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was

[1] *Cf.* S. John x. 9.

born blind?" Our Lord answers, that neither of these alternatives accounts for the man's blindness; that the true explanation of it is to be found in the manifestation of God's work in healing him. He then very briefly draws attention to three characteristics of His ministry:

1. He recognizes its shortness. "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

2. He reveals its purpose. "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world"; and

3. He manifests its power in the healing of the blind man.

II. The blind man himself is a type of humanity. He was blind from his birth. We are born with the effects of the Fall in us, manifested in the privation of spiritual sight; for, as S. Paul teaches us, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."[1] And Christ Himself tells us that, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."[2]

From the very nature of his affliction he cannot see our Lord. But Jesus sees him, and approaches to heal him. So was it with the human race at the Incarnation. They knew something of their misery; but they could not see their way to God. But God saw them, and loved them, and sent His only-begotten Son to heal them and save them.

So it is with the individual now. The sinner may know the burden of his sin, may realize his own helplessness. But this does not enable him to see his way to the Saviour of sinners. Jesus must seek him first; for all first motions of grace come from God. It is God's grace which leads us to penitence and to Christ.

In this miracle our Lord uses a symbolic sign, in that He

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 14. [2] S. John iii. 3.

makes clay with His spittle, and spreads it on the eyes of the blind man. Perhaps this act should be associated with that act of God by which we are told that "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." [1] Thus may we recognize the identity of the hand which heals man with the hand which created him.

He is then sent to wash in the pool of Siloam. By this we are taught the use of means in spiritual, as well as in physical, healing. Christ, having placed within the man's reach the means of grace, instructs him how to use them when He tells him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. His faith is in this way called into action, and manifests itself by the obedient use of the means which Christ commands, and so his eyes are opened. We can hardly fail here to recognize a type of the Sacraments, especially those of Baptism and Absolution, by which sin is washed away, and spiritual sight given or restored.

There were many who washed in Siloam, but who were not healed of their diseases. So there are many who use the Sacraments, but only those find them efficacious who approach them with right dispositions, and use them with faithful obedience.

His neighbours who had known him when he was blind doubted whether it could be he or not, so changed did he seem. So ought it to be now with those who are spiritually healed. The working of grace ought to manifest itself in such an altered life as should make people wonder and glorify God!

III. In the circumstances which are recorded as following this miracle we have a most striking illustration both of the development of unbelief, and of the growth of faith.

The Pharisees, representing the authorities of the Jewish Church, carefully investigate the circumstances of the miracle. And in this they are to be commended; for we should always investigate a new truth before we accept it. But, alas! they

[1] Gen. ii. 7.

approach the investigation with a prejudice so deeply rooted, that, instead of being converted by the incontrovertible facts which their examination brought to light, they are only hardened in unbelief. And we may trace three distinct stages in the growth of this unbelief:

1. The first stage is taken up with a debate on the subject, ending in a division of opinion, some saying, "This man is not of GOD, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day." Here we observe the prejudice in regard to keeping the Sabbath hinders a fair decision. Others, however, said more justly, "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" The one side starts with prejudice, and refuses to recognize the facts of the miracle; the other starts from the work of mercy, and argues from it that the man who performed it cannot be a sinner.

2. The next stage consists in an examination of the parents of the blind man; for, disbelieving the testimony of the man in regard to his being born blind, they sent for his parents and examined them, obtaining from them only a confirmation of the fact that the man certainly was born blind. The parents, fearing the Jews, declined to express any opinion about the miracle. They therefore call the man before them a second time, and say to him, "Give GOD the praise: we know that this man is a sinner."

The phrase "Give GOD the praise" was a solemn adjuration to declare the whole truth. "*We* know that this man is a sinner" was a claim to absolute infallibility of judgment on their part as guardians of the truth. Since they cannot deny the fact of the miracle, they would trace the man's cure directly to GOD, and require that gratitude should be rendered to Him, and not in any way to Christ Who performed it, Whom they proclaimed to be a sinner, because He had healed the man on the Sabbath-day.

3. The third stage brings them to final action. They decide in contradiction to the evidence, and angrily excommunicate the man, because they cannot withstand his simple argument—"Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." The words "they cast him out" imply that, having reached an agreement that "if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue," they make a first example of this man.

IV. As we are able to trace the development of unbelief on the part of the Pharisees, so we see the stages in the growth of faith in the blind man, who, approaching truth without prejudice, gains courage under persecution, and a clearer grasp of truth.

1. First he expresses only a favourable opinion of Christ, that He is a Prophet.[1] This is his first position, and he reaches it by observing that no man could do such a miracle as had been wrought upon himself, unless he were of God. He knew from the history of his nation that God's prophets in time past had performed miracles. Therefore he ascribes to our Lord the authority of a Prophet of God.

2. Then he generously makes himself the defender and disciple of his benefactor, when the Pharisees contemptuously speak of our Lord as a "fellow," whose origin they know not, but whom they know to be a sinner.

3. After the man has been excommunicated our Lord seeks him, finds him, and instructs him in the truth, which he could never have found out for himself, that his Benefactor was not

[1] S. John ix. 17.

only a Prophet, but the Son of God! The man manifests a childlike simplicity in receiving our Lord's instructions. He only desires to know, that he may believe; and, believing, he acts on his faith by worshipping Christ.

Surely, there are two lessons which we may draw from this miracle, which are needed at all times—the danger of approaching the investigation of truth with a rooted prejudice which clouds our intellect and warps our judgment; and the duty of coming to Christ with a teachable spirit. There are many who love to argue about religion, in order that by their arguments they may win a victory for their own side, or support their own opinion. Such are seldom likely to be led into the truth. If we are to follow Christ, Who is the Truth, we must be ready to lay aside prejudices and to study carefully and prayerfully His teachings.

Sermon CXV.

LIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

(The Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.)

Amos iii. 3.

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

AMONG Commentators there is a difference of opinion in regard to the question whether the string of parables or proverbs found in this place are to be taken with the context which precedes, or with that which follows them. If the latter, the two who are "agreed" will be Jehovah and His prophet, and the proverb is adduced as a proof of the authority of Amos.

It seems, however, far more natural to take these parables with what goes before them, and this certainly renders a better sense. The words which precede our text are, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Then follows the question, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

The sense is obvious, that Israel has not walked with GOD, because Israel has not been in harmony with GOD, but has rebelled against His laws and opposed His teachings at every step of the way. GOD calls attention to the primary maxim, that two cannot walk together unless there be some internal harmony between them. Without this, there will be continual friction, continual rebellion, ending in the separation of the two.

I. To walk with GOD, or to walk before GOD, is a phrase which we constantly meet with in Holy Writ. We find it first used to describe Enoch's perfect life; for we are told that "Enoch *walked with God:* and he was not; for GOD took him."[1] Again we come across the phrase in GOD's revelation to Abram, "I am the Almighty GOD; *walk before Me*, and be thou perfect."[2] And the same expression is constantly used for those who serve GOD faithfully. The Psalmist makes his prayer that he may walk before GOD in the light of the living, and in the land of the living.[3] And our Lord, in His message to the Church in Sardis, says of the few who are faithful in that unfaithful city, "They shall walk with Me in white."[4]

A study of these passages will make it very clear what is meant by "walking with GOD." It signifies a life lived in His conscious presence, a life devoted to His constant service. To walk with GOD is to hold the closest and most continued communion with Him, to have Him in a sense for our Companion, for our Friend, as well as for our Master and our GOD. To this privilege GOD called His people Israel. He guided them

[1] Gen. v. 24. [2] Gen. xvii. 1. [3] *Cf.* Psalm lvi. 13; cxvi. 9. [4] Rev. iii. 4.

safely through the wilderness, He gave them power to conquer their enemies, and established them securely in Canaan; He revealed to them the laws which would have enabled them to live in holiness and happiness. He offered to be their King and their God, to protect them against their foes, to bless them abundantly in their daily life. But they rejected His offers again and again, they rebelled against Him, they abandoned His service, and turned to idolatry. And yet they still called themselves His people, and expected Jehovah to save them from the disasters which they had brought upon themselves by their own sins.

In this place, therefore, God, while threatening them with punishment, draws attention to the only condition under which man can walk with God and secure for himself the protection of His favour.

II. This condition is stated under the form of a proverb or parable, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Now this agreement implies something more than mere external uniformity. It demands an inward harmony. Two cannot walk together in life, with any happiness, unless they be congenial; and that congeniality depends upon character, not upon outward circumstances.

So, if man is to walk with God, there must be a real harmony between the two. The observance of certain external rules of religious conduct is not sufficient. There must be a conformity of will, which implies a fellowship in aim and view. If man is to walk with God, his aim in life must be to glorify God. His view of life must be that it is given him to do God's work, to fulfil God's purpose.

The most perfect life that was ever lived on this earth was the Life of Jesus Christ, Whose ruling passion was to do His Father's Will, to finish His Father's work. As the poet has written,

"I worship thee, sweet Will of God!
And all thy ways adore,
And every day I live I seem
To love thee more and more.

Thou wert the end, the blessed rule
Of our Saviour's toils and tears;
Thou wert the passion of His Heart
Those three-and-thirty years."

And this must be the ruling passion of our life, to do GOD'S Will, to accomplish GOD'S purpose. If it be, then our aim in life will be in perfect harmony with GOD'S purpose for us; our view of life will be that revealed in the life of our Lord. Conformity to the Will of GOD is a phrase often on our lips. It sums up the secret of duty here and happiness hereafter—of duty which brings its own happiness even in this life, and issues in the happiness of heaven. For the reward of eternity is twofold, the beatification of the intellect and of the will. The first is accomplished through the Beatific Vision, and the second by that ecstatic love which will make eternity one great throb of unutterable joy!

But if this is to be our lot for ever in the world to come, the intellect and the will must be trained, in this life, to take their part in the life of heaven. The intellect must be trained to look upon things from GOD'S point of view, not merely from the world's standpoint, which is generally opposed to man's true happiness. And S. Paul, so far from thinking this an impossibility, triumphantly proclaims, "We have the mind of Christ."[1] This follows, according to his teaching, from being spiritually minded. And he warns us that the opposite of this, "the carnal mind is enmity against GOD."[2] And by "carnal" he means very much what we understand by "worldly mindedness."

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 16. [2] Rom. vii. 7.

We must, therefore, set ourselves deliberately to train our intellects, that they may be in harmony with the mind of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ.

And then we must train our wills into real conformity with God's Will. We know that His Will rules the universe; that it called us into being; that it has a purpose for us in life; that it is a holy Will, as well as an omnipotent Will. It is, therefore, reasonable that, if we are to walk with God, we should strive to bring our wills into agreement with God's Will; for, as Amos asks, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

It has often been observed that two people who live together in a fellowship of love become like one another. And if we are walking with God, in harmony with His mind, in obedience to His Will; if we have what S. John calls "fellowship with God," we shall grow godlike; that is, the image of God in which we were created, but which was marred by the Fall, will become more perfect and more manifest in us. Surely, this is what we mean by a godly man, a man who lives according to God's laws, according to God's mind, according to God's Will.

How beautiful is such a life, even in the eyes of our fellowmen; and, what is better, how happy it will make us, to be growing like Him Whom we love better than all things, to be walking with Him in daily companionship, having our life shaped by His guidance, our mind illumined by His Spirit, our wills strengthened by His grace! What happiness here; and then, what a preparation for the great hereafter!

Happiness is always harmony, as misery is always discord. This is true in the world without, and in the world within us; but it is most true in our relation to God. To be in harmony with the Divine Will is happiness; to be out of harmony with It is misery; for it means strife and rebellion instead of peace in our souls.

And then this is true also of the two great futures which await man beyond the grave, heaven and hell. In heaven all is peace, because all is harmony with God's Will; in hell all is discord, and bitterness, and strife, because all is rebellion against God's Will.

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" This is the question which Amos asks us in the Lesson to-day. And he tells us the condition on which depends our ability to walk with God. Some try to persuade themselves that they are walking with God, because they call themselves Christians, and go to Church, and accept the Articles of the Christian Faith; while their whole life is out of harmony with God.

This was the position of the Jews against whom Amos prophesied. They called themselves God's people; but they rebelled against God. God threatens them with punishment, but first asks, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

Is it possible that you can claim the privileges of God's people, when you utterly reject God's laws? The principle is true for all time; the question belongs as much to us as it did to the Israelites of old.

Let us strive honestly to answer it, to look into our own lives, and see whether we have the mind of Christ, whether we are striving to do the Will of God; whether, therefore, we are so walking before God in this world, that we may walk with Him, according to His promise, in the kingdom of His love in heaven.

Sermon CXVI.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

(The Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. JOHN X. 14.

"I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine."

IN the first eighteen verses of this chapter we have no less than three allegories, which bring before us the morning, afternoon, and evening, of a shepherd's life and work; the allegory of the shepherd who in the morning leads forth his flock from the fold (vv. 1-6); the allegory of the door by which the sheep enter the afternoon's shelter (vv. 7-11); and the allegory of the good shepherd who in the evening leads back his flock to the fold, often meeting with foes on the road home (vv. 11-19).

In these allegories our Lord is doubtless referring to certain prophecies in Isaiah and Ezekiel, in which the work of the Messiah is represented under the figure of a shepherd's care.[1] The allegory of the good shepherd, like the twenty-third Psalm, ranks, in the estimation of most of us, as among the most beautiful passages in Holy Scripture, with its exquisite pastoral simplicity and tenderness. And yet how much more it must have meant to those who heard it—with their knowledge of the life of an Eastern shepherd—than it can mean to us, unless indeed we take pains to study the conditions of a shepherd's life in Palestine in our Lord's day.

I. Beneath the burning skies and in the clear starry night of the Holy Land, there grows up between the shepherd and

[1] *Cf.* Isaiah xl.; Ezek. xxxiv.

his flock an affection entirely unknown to shepherds in our own country.

The dangers to the sheep are so much greater than they are with us, dangers from mountain torrent, from hill robbers, from wolves, and other wild animals, which make the shepherd the guardian and protector of his sheep, often at the risk of his own life. And this constitutes a school of love in which are cultivated a mutual knowledge and affection. Dangers shared and hardships borne together make generous friendships, even between man and the lower animals.

Then, too, there is the loneliness of the Syrian shepherd; the burning heats, the droughts, the long watchings which he has to endure, with no books to pass away his time; all resulting not only in the growth of affection for his sheep, but in a wonderfully intimate knowledge of them. And this knowledge is reciprocated. They know their shepherd so well, that they learn to trust him perfectly.

In our country the shepherd drives his sheep before him by the aid of dogs. In the East he goes before, often playing upon his pipe; and the sheep, as our Lord says, "follow him." They follow him because they know his voice. They follow him, though he should be leading them away from some green pasture by a rocky road, to another pasture which they cannot see; for, so far as they are capable of love, they have learned to love their protector with the love of a grateful life. And affection often grows intense between man and the dumb animals he protects and cares for. How many touching stories we have of the Arab and his horse, of the man and his dog.

Many of us will remember, in this connection, the pathetic circumstances of the death of one of the greatest priests the Church of England has produced in our days, Father Mackonochie, of S. Alban's, Holborn.

On the morning of Thursday, December the 15th, 1887,

Father Mackonochie, who had been staying at Ballachulish with his friend the Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, set out for a long walk to the head of Loch Leven, accompanied by the Bishop's terrior and deer-hound, of whom he was very fond and who were his constant walking companions, when a violent storm of darkness, and wind, and snow, came on. The night approached, but he never returned, and the Bishop and several parties of gillies and shepherds sought for two nights and two days unsuccessfully; and on the Saturday evening, despairing and sick at heart, were about to abandon the search as unsuccessful; when one of the men, glancing up the hillside, saw the deer-hound sitting upright against the snowy background, and immediately sent to tell the Bishop, who was with another party of searchers. When he arrived he found the whole band of keepers and shepherds drawn up in a semicircle in a snowy hollow, kept at bay by the two dogs, who refused to let a creature approach, until they caught sight of their master, when they sprang forward and covered him with caresses. There, in a snowy hollow, guarded by the two dogs—Righ, the deer-hound beside him, with the little Skye at his feet, lay the weary body of Christ's faithful servant, his head pillowed on his hand, and a pall of spotless snow veiling his features. He had wandered twenty miles through the storm, and had fallen at last in the forest of Marmore. The two faithful dogs had kept watch for forty-eight hours over the lifeless body of their friend, till the voice of their master told them that the vigil was ended.[1]

Many indeed are the stories of fidelity and affection between the lower animals and man, and we must try to realize that the disciples, to whom our Lord addressed the allegory of the Good Shepherd, felt all that was implied of tenderness, and faithfulness, and love, in the title "the Good Shepherd." It

[1] *Cf.* "Memoirs of a Sister of S. Saviour's Priory," pp. 181-185; "Alexander Heriot Mackonochie, A Memoir," by E. A. T., pp. 286-290.

was for them the dearest title Christ could have claimed; for they were familiar with their Old Testament, the stories of the shepherd Jacob, of the shepherd-king David, and of his beautiful Psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing."[1]

We find, too, that in early Christian art the emblem of the Good Shepherd is the most frequent in use—for instance, in the Catacombs at Rome, and in later years in the great churches as we see in Ravenna; for it was some time before the Crucifix, telling of the Passion, took the place it has ever since occupied in the Christian Church. This means, of course, that to the Christians of the first ages of the Church the thought of our Lord as the Good Shepherd, with all the tenderness, and care, and self-devotion which it suggested, was the aspect of Christ's work on which they loved most to dwell.

II. There are many points for our consideration in the allegory of the Good Shepherd. Let us confine ourselves to-day to the one brought before us in the text—the knowledge of the good shepherd—"I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine."

How intimate was the knowledge which the Eastern shepherd had of all the sheep in his flock! He spent his days and nights with them. He came to know them well, their separate histories, their ailments, their differences of character, their needs. But how much more perfect is the knowledge which the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, our Lord Jesus Christ, possesses in regard to each one of His flock! He knows every circumstance in our life, and its effect upon our character. He knows the weak points, the wrong tendencies, in each of us. He knows just how perseveringly we struggle against them, just how faithfully we use the means of grace which will enable us to overcome them. Then He knows our needs so much better than we do; as David said,

[1] Psalm xxiii. 1.

"The Lord is my shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing." Because Christ is my Shepherd, therefore all my needs will be supplied; all my real needs; all that is necessary for the development of my character, for the salvation of my soul; but perhaps not all that I in my blindness think necessary, not all that the world would persuade me is necessary.

Then again, our Lord knows our hopes and aspirations, knows the ruling passion of our life, whether it is noble or sordid, whether our hearts are set on heaven or on some earthly prize. He knows all our temptations, He realizes precisely what is their force, and always provides us with sufficient grace to meet them, if we will use that grace.

What a comfort and joy the fact of this knowledge ought to be to us, what trust it should beget in our souls! It should enable us to say what the shepherd-king said, "The Lord is my shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture: and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. He shall convert my soul: and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me. Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them that trouble me: Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full. But Thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." [1]

III. But this is not all. The Good Shepherd not only says, "I know My sheep," but, "I am known of Mine." Then the knowledge must be reciprocal. We are certain that Christ knows us. Do we know Him, or do we only know *about* Him? Can we recognize the tones of His voice? Do we follow the leading of that voice? The Eastern shepherds not only knew

[1] Psalm xxiii.

their sheep, but the sheep by experience knew all the faithful care and watchful tenderness which their shepherd invariably showed them.

The image of a sheep well represents our position; for a sheep is defenceless—too weak to fight if left by itself, too slow to run. Without that instinct which some animals have, and which makes up for strength and swiftness, the sheep depends entirely on the shepherd, and trusts implicitly to him, and if it obeys his calls it is safe.

We must strive for this knowledge of Christ which will so strengthen our faith. We are weak and defenceless by ourselves, but through Him we can conquer every foe. We must strive to know Him better, that we may love Him more, and trust Him, not only in the small things of life, but in the great ones as well; that we may trust Him always. So shall we never trust Him in vain.

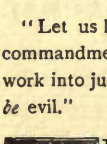
Sermon CXVII.

THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.

(The Sunday next before Advent.)

ECCLESIASTES XII. 13, 14.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear GOD, and keep His commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For GOD shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."



HERE is something very solemn in the thought that this is the last Sunday in the Church's year. Next Sunday we shall have turned back once more to the beginning of our Prayer Books and entered upon a new year of grace. Now we are standing, as it were,

upon the threshold, waiting for one short week to pass before we enter its portals. Surely, this is a time for serious thought, for thorough self-examination and for earnest prayer, issuing in a hearty determination to serve God in this next year more faithfully than in the past. We must look back over the year that is gone, and more perhaps—over that portion of our life which is already spent, mourning over its failures, repenting of its sins, learning from its mistakes, that we may with fresh courage enter upon a new year of grace, of opportunity, and of responsibility. To help us in this work it would be difficult to find any part of Holy Writ more appropriate than that which the Church has selected for the Old Testament Lesson for this morning's service, ending as it does with the words of my text, which are in themselves precisely the conclusion to which our meditations ought to lead us in preparation for Advent.

I. First, the Lesson itself calls our attention to a wonderful book of the Bible, which is perhaps little read by the ordinary Christian, but about which much has been written, a book around which much controversy has gathered in regard to its authorship and date, the point of view of the writer, and his purpose in writing the book. Passing over to-day the question of authorship and date as indeed of secondary importance, let us briefly consider the other questions before we proceed to the lesson so plainly taught us in our text.

What was the point of view of the writer? Some have thought him a stoic, others an epicurean. Some have thought him a sceptic, others a fatalist. Many have read the book only as the conclusions of a hopeless pessimist. What shall we say? Surely, that such views are quite irreconcilable with the last chapter, and especially with the last two verses, which set forth the whole duty of man as comprehended in fearing God and keeping His commandments. Is there not another point of view possible, that of a man whose lot is cast in evil times,

around him oppression and injustice, a time of confusion and suffering, an age of darkness, in which the promises of Holy Scripture seem to be unfulfilled, when the ungodly flourish like a green bay tree, and the poor and righteous are oppressed?

Living in such an age, the writer, a man of deep thought, reviews the strange problems of human life, recognizing to the full what is dark and disappointing, striving in fact to present fairly the problems of life, certainly not colouring it too brightly, and ending by presenting in most striking contrast two possible solutions of the problem, the one tersely expressed in the proposition with which the book opens, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity"; the other just as forcibly put in the proposition with which the book closes, "Fear GOD, and keep His commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man." And the writer does not leave us in doubt in regard to which of these solutions he considers to be true, for he introduces the latter with the words, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear GOD, and keep His commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man."

In those chapters in which he argues that all things are but vanity, we must observe a peculiar phrase which constantly recurs—indeed, no less than twenty-nine times, "under the sun." And this seems to throw light upon his meaning, that all things regarded simply from this world's point of view, everything, that is, under the world's sun, is vanity. Thus he excludes from the category of vanity those things which have regard to GOD, to the life to come, and to the service of GOD in this life, for there is no verse in which he suggests that the service of GOD, that is, the keeping of His commandments, is vanity.

Thus considered, Ecclesiastes is a book for all time, and never more appropriate than to-day, when not only articles of faith, but standards of morality, are assailed by agnosticism, materialism and worldliness. Indeed, the agnostic position is

very fairly stated by the writer of Ecclesiastes and summed up in the words with which he expresses the disappointment of all life apart from God, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Life is not worth living, for life and all its interests end in disappointment. But in contrast to this he offers the alternative, to fear God and keep His commandments, which he tells us sums up the whole of man.

If people to-day would face the deep problems of life, and instead of passing them over superficially would really think them out, they would see they lead to one of these two conclusions, either my life has no meaning, has no value, ends in nothing but disappointment; or life was given me to serve God, and in this I can find happiness, the satisfaction of all my desires.

II. But let us notice with what logical precision the writer states the case for God's side. He shows us that God demands of us two things, and that these requirements rest upon two facts, which are the reasons why we should respond to God's demands. The two things which God asks of us are (1) that we should fear Him, and (2) keep His commandments. The reasons are that in doing this (1) we fulfil the whole [duty] of man, and (2) prepare for God's judgment.

But let us investigate these points more carefully, and first let us examine the reasons why we should fear God and keep His commandments.

1. Because in doing this man fulfils his true end and finds his highest happiness. The word "duty" in the passage is in italics, as showing that it is not in the Hebrew text. The text is stronger, because more general, "For this is the whole of man." That is, not only his duty but his highest good, the object for which he was created, the fulfilment of God's purpose for him, that in which all the latent powers of his higher nature are

developed and find satisfaction, his reward both here and hereafter.

There is a one-sided view of the Christian life which would represent the life of the Christian in this world as altogether one of sorrow, and would reserve for the world beyond all the happiness and joy. How untrue this is, for while sorrow and suffering are indeed the lot of Christians here who are striving to take up their cross and follow their Master Christ, yet even their sorrows and sufferings are transmuted into joy by the magic power of that love of God which is the Christian's greatest virtue in this life, as it will be his greatest happiness in the life to come. Who had more sorrows and sufferings than S. Paul? And yet who writes more about the joys of Christian service? He speaks of himself as joyful in all his tribulation;[1] "As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing";[2] as "in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost."[3]

A Christian's sorrows then are always like clouds with a silver lining. But Christian life is not altogether a life of sorrow; there is much of real happiness, much of great joy; indeed the greatest happiness, the truest joy of this world belongs alone to the Christian. And this follows of necessity, for joy is the second fruit of the Holy Spirit, "For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,"[4] etc. And it is not only S. Paul, but S. Peter, S. John, and S. James, indeed all the writers of the New Testament, who dwell on the joy of Christian life. Read the lives of the Saints, and what do you find there? That they were morose, and disappointed, and unhappy? Nay, that they were bright with the light of God's presence, satisfied with the gifts of His grace, ecstatic in their happiness when in communion with Him; that they found in the possession of Christ here a foretaste of the happiness of Eternity.

[1] *Cf.* 2 Cor. vii. 4. [2] 2 Cor. vi. 10. [3] 1 Thess. i. 6. [4] Gal. v. 22.

The first reason then for serving God is that in it we find our whole life, that is, all that is worth calling our life—the exercise of those faculties which ennoble us, the satisfaction of those appetites which God implanted in us. So that instead of having to say, "All is vanity and disappointment," we can proclaim that "All things work together for good to them that love God." [1]

Then, besides this, there is another reason why we should serve God—the fact of the judgment. As Ecclesiastes expresses it, that God shall bring every work into judgment. The innate sense of responsibility in man is a witness to the fact that there is a judgment, for this sense is otherwise inexplicable; since we must be responsible to some one, and there must be a time when we must give an account.

But while we look forward to a day when it shall be said unto us, "Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward," [2] we must remember that judgment is not only a thing of the future, it is also a matter of the present, as the Psalmist says, "God is a righteous Judge, strong, and patient: and God is provoked *every day*." [3] Our works are being judged daily, and daily in love is God correcting us and chastening us for those works that are evil, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." [4]

It is in mercy and love that God punishes us in this life, wherein our punishment may be of avail. The ungodly often flourish like the green bay tree, that is, they are successful in their schemes, prosperous in this world, and apparently free from punishment here. Why? Because punishment for them would be of no avail, and therefore is not inflicted here where it would do them no good. We are judged every day, punished now in love. Let us strive to realize this, both that we may

[1] Rom. viii. 28. [2] S. Luke xvi. 2. [3] Psalm vii. 12. [4] Heb. xii. 6.

accept gladly God's loving discipline, and also that the realization of His judgments may lead us to serve Him more faithfully.

Then there is also that Day of the general Judgment when every man shall give an account of his works, to which Ecclesiastes probably more especially refers; and the remembrance of the strictness of that judgment, and the awful sentence which will then be declared upon those who are lost, ought to be a very strong inducement to lead us to fear God and to keep His commandments.

2. To fear God and keep His commandments. This is what God requires of us as our whole duty and happiness. To fear God, not as the sinner fears Him, with terror and fright. The phrase "Fear God," used so often in Holy Scripture, implies rather reverence and awe, which are the necessary result of the recognition of what God is in Himself and of our true relation to Him. If we realize what God is, so great, so holy, so loving, so good, we shall fear Him indeed with holy and loving reverence; and if we have this reverence for God we shall certainly strive to keep His commandments; and this for two reasons; first, because we fear and love God. Our Lord said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." We cannot love God and not strive to keep His commandments. Then the other reason is, that "His commandments are not grievous."[1] Indeed, they are the true way of happiness, for what commandment has God ever given to us that is not for our own good? God's commandments are not arbitrary. They are not burdens laid upon us, but rather rules given us for our guidance amid the devious pathways of this world.

At the end of the Christian Year, looking forward to Advent, which tells of our Lord's coming in great glory to judge both quick and dead, what more helpful thoughts can we have than

[1] 1 S. John v. 3.

those suggested by this passage from Ecclesiastes? What better resolution can we make for the New Year than to fear God and keep His commandments more faithfully than in the past, to fulfil the injunction of a greater than Ecclesiastes, to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness?

Sermon CXVIII.

A REVELATION OF CHRISTIAN LIFE.

(The Sunday next before Advent.)

S. John xvi. 33.

"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

THESE words formed the conclusion of our Lord's farewell discourse with His apostles before His Passion—that discourse which took place in the upper chamber on Maundy Thursday night. And in the chapter from which our text is taken we may recognize clearly two notes, one of sorrow, the other of triumph, which recur again and again, like the subjects of a musical composition in various forms, but always with the same characteristics of sorrow and joy, of struggle and triumph.

They suggest a not unfitting subject for to-day, when we are on the threshold of a new Christian Year, looking forward to that Advent season which has so distinctly a twofold aspect, a solemn and awful side, as well as a joyous and triumphant one; for the thought of our Lord's advent must fill us with awe, as we reflect on the Judgment which will then take place; and with joy, as we think of the final conquest of all evil, the ultimate triumph of Christ.

A Revelation of Christian Life.

I. The sixteenth chapter of S. John opens with a clear revelation of what the life of a Christian was to be—a life of suffering. This is the first note, and it recurs again and again. Our Lord first tells His disciples that they are to expect persecution—ostracism, excommunication, martyrdom. "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." Then Christ goes on to make clear His purpose in foretelling this life of suffering; for He says, "These things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them."

It would be well for us to write these words upon the tablets of our memory; so that when the time does come that we have to suffer—whatever the character of our sufferings may be—we may recall that our Lord not only told us that this must be the Christian's lot, but strove to impress upon His disciples that, when the moment of suffering came, they were to remember His words.

One of the characteristics in which our Lord differs from every other teacher is that He calls upon His followers to count the cost of becoming His disciples. He warns them that in this world they must have tribulation, although He promises them victory and a glorious reward in eternity!

How greatly the consideration of this truth should help us in meeting the manifold trials of life! They are no strange experiences which *ought not* to happen to a Christian. On the contrary, they are precisely what our Lord tells us is the normal condition of Christian life. And if we realized this more—instead of thinking that bitter trials and overwhelming difficulties were signs that God did not care for us, did not watch over us, we should recall our Lord's words, "These things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them."

In the previous chapter, which forms part of the same discourse, these persecutions are traced to their cause—the hatred of the world, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."[1] And this hatred of the world is really the hatred of him who is the Prince of the world, and who hates all those whom Christ has called out of the world, and who have obeyed His call.

What do we mean by the world? It is a term which includes so much, that it is impossible to define it. We mean an immense number of forces and influences, among which our lives are cast, all controlled and directed by the mightiest created intellect, the intellect of the Prince of this world, who once was Lucifer, the Archangel in heaven. There is the force which we call society—and this alone covers much. There is the power of politics, of money; for the world has its prizes—riches, fame, pleasure; and it has its penalties—ostracism, ridicule, poverty; all manipulated by the Prince of the world, who conceals himself in the background, or disguises himself as an angel of light. And the follower of Christ not only finds all these powers in opposition to him, but a spirit of hatred in the world, which manifests itself against those who have renounced the world to follow Jesus Christ.

Some may say, But excommunication and martyrdom are not dangers which threaten those who profess Christ to-day. No; and yet the world persecutes us just as really as it persecuted Christians in the Apostolic age. The forms of persecution are different. The end is the same—either to seduce

[1] S. John xv. 18-20.

us to accept its dominion, or to coerce us into yielding to its demands.

The temptations of the world are very real; as I have said, prizes on the one hand, penalties on the other. You shall be rich, admired, successful, if you will follow the world's teachings; you shall be ridiculed, ostracized, you shall be poor, if you set yourself in opposition to its requirements.

Let us clearly realize that our Lord has warned us of these things, that He foretold persecution as the consequence of following Him. And He recurs to this throughout the chapter. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice": . . . "And ye now therefore have sorrow": . . . "The hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own": . . . "In the world ye shall have tribulation."

When, therefore, we are in trouble—and how often that is the case!—or in sorrow, or affliction, or great temptation, it will help us if we say to ourselves, My Master told me that this must be my lot. No strange thing has happened to me, nothing that I ought not to expect. This is but the cross which every Christian must bear.

II. The other revelation which we find in this chapter is, that we are not left to fight life's battles alone; that in all these sufferings we have an Almighty, a Divine Helper and Guide. I have said that there are two notes which recur again and again in this chapter, the one of sorrow, the other of joy. We have considered the first. Let us turn our attention to the second.

No sooner did our Master tell His disciples of the sorrow which was in store for them, than He added, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." And interspersed with the notes of sorrow we find the promises of the Comforter. We are told what He shall do to the world, that He shall "convict the

world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"; that He shall guide Christ's disciples into all truth; that He shall show them things to come. And then we learn the results of this, that sorrow shall be turned into joy, that prayer shall be made in Christ's Name, through the power of the Holy Ghost, and shall be always efficacious, to our great happiness. "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." And then the whole chapter, nay, the whole discourse, is concluded and summed up in the triumph-cry of our text, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." By the help of the Holy Ghost, we, like our Lord, and in His power, can overcome the world.

The word which is used as the title of the Holy Ghost in this chapter is most difficult to translate, because it means so many things. In our version we render it "The Comforter." In the margin of the Revised Version we have, as an alternative, either "Advocate" or "Helper." And some have translated it "Teacher." While in our hymns we frequently retain the Greek original, "Paraclete" Παράκλητος, which, as the derivation shows, means "one who is called to our side to help us." Originally this was a forensic term, applied to the counsel for the defence.

It however really includes all the meanings we have suggested; for in our sorrows we call the Holy Ghost to our side to console us as our Comforter; in our temptations we invoke His aid to help us resist them, when He is our Helper. In our doubts as to truth and right, He is our Guide and Teacher; in our prayers He is our Advocate, our Intercessor—not like Christ in His life of glory, making intercession for us at the right hand of the Father, but in our hearts making "intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought."[1]

[1] Rom. viii. 26.

It will help us, as we pass the threshold of the new Christian Year, to put these two great revelations clearly before us: I must expect tribulation, sorrow, trial, temptation, and the persecution of the world. But I may also expect—nay, I am certain of possessing—a Divine Helper, the Holy Ghost, and by His aid I can turn the sorrow into joy; by His might, in temptation and tribulation, I can be assured of victory.

Sermon CXIX.

THE DUTY OF GLEANING.

(Harvest Festival.)

RUTH II. 8.

"Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean n another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens."

THERE are few stories in the Old Testament which possess a greater charm for people of all classes than the story of Ruth. It is one that the poor *feel;* for it brings before them their own yearly work of gleaning; while to the educated it appeals as an agricultural idyl of exquisite pathos and simplicity. Its description of the customs of an agricultural people is most vivid and most picturesque, while it is interspersed with passages of wonderful tenderness and beauty. For example, where can we find anything to surpass Ruth's reply to Naomi, when her mother-in-law would have sent her back to her country and her people? "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy GOD my

God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." [1]

And it is a story especially appropriate for our consideration on this occasion, bringing before us, as it does, one of the operations of harvest which is most suggestive of our lifework in preparing for the great harvest at the end of this world.

We must remember that in one of our Lord's greatest parables, that of the tares and the wheat,[2] Christ uses the image of the harvest to remind us of our account which must be given in at the end of the world, to teach us of the strictness with which the good and bad will be separated at the last day. And in the Book of Revelation [3] we find the image applied in the same way.

The introduction of the practice of gleaning is lost in antiquity. We find it enjoined in the Mosaic Law, "When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the Lord your God." [4]

Boaz in this book is a type of Christ, and Ruth is the type of the Christian soul. And the command given by Boaz to Ruth to glean in his fields, and not to glean in any other field, is very emphatic, and is repeated afterwards by Naomi.[5]

I. First, where are we to glean? There are many fields which invite us, some in which the gleaning seems very easy on account of the abundance which offers itself to our hand. But we are warned that there is only one field in which we must glean—the field of Jesus Christ; the field of His Church; the field purchased by His Death and Passion; the field watered

[1] Ruth i. 16, 17. [2] S. Matt. xiii. 24-31 and 37-44. [3] Rev. xiv. 15.
[4] Deut. xxiv. 19-22; Levit. xix. 9, 10; *cf.* also xxiii. 22. [5] Ruth ii. 22.

by the blood of His martyrs; the field which for nineteen hundred years has produced its glorious harvest of countless saints.

David says, "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God."[1] We must first be planted there by the Sacrament of Baptism. But this is not all. We must remain there, and grow there, and flourish there, and *glean* there, if we are to fulfil the commands of Holy Writ.

There are other religious fields which lie side by side with that of the Church, and which offer special inducements to the gleaners. In them we are told the gleaning is easier; there are not so many rules and regulations; you can do more as you please; you can exercise your own judgment, follow your own will. But in these fields of an imperfect Christianity, while there is doubtless much that is good, there is not a little which is, to say the least, imperfect—false doctrine and invalid sacraments. While we must thankfully recognize God's grace working and good seed growing sometimes in these fields, we are warned that we know of a more excellent way, of a more perfect field in which we can glean the Bread of Life, in which we can find the truth which has been handed down by the living voice of Christ's Church from Christ Himself.

Then again, there are fields still more dangerous and seductive—the world's fields. These are many, and the fruits they offer us are abundant—fruits of worldly position, of worldly power, of worldly fame, of pleasure, and, alas! often of sin. Well may the true Boaz in love warn us, "Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens."

II. Then what are we to glean? Even those who are gleaning in Christ's Church need to be reminded that they are to seek those things which are best.

What are we gleaning? Are we making the best use of our

[1] Psalm xcii. 13.

labour? Are we picking up the largest, and finest, and ripest ears of corn? Or are we passing them over, and only gleaning the inferior ears, those that have but small grains in them? We have all the blessings, and privileges, and advantages of the Church. Are we using them all? The Sacraments of the Church, these are the full, ripe ears, the great means of grace. Do we avail ourselves of them in all their fulness? Or do we pass them over, only using inferior means of grace, such as attendance at Matins and Evensong, hearing sermons, and such like?

Or, again, are we picking up those stalks of corn from which the birds have plucked the ears, which are, therefore, only husks and straw? What are our prayers and devotions? Are they merely formal words of the lips, and not feelings of the heart; the form of devotion, without the spirit? If so, this is gleaning husks and straw from which the full, ripe ears have fallen out.

Or, worse still, are we picking up noxious weeds which grow among the corn, and making up our sheaves with them? Christ told us that tares should grow among the wheat, even in His own field. Are we picking up these tares and weeds, all that is evil and useless, and making up our store with them?

S. Paul tells us some of the things which we should be gleaning in the fields of Christian virtue, when he says, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."[1]

III. Lastly, how are we gleaning? With steady perseverance, with real industry; or in a fitful, idle, slothful way? It would have been of little use for Ruth to have stood idle, even in the right field. She had to work hard. You know what gleaning is. It is not one great exercise of strength, and then

[1] Phil. iv. 8.

rest; but it is a steady picking up the corn piece by piece. It requires perseverance. Only those do any good at it who do persevere.

And so it is in spiritual gleaning. We cannot be converted and saved out of hand, as some tell us; but we must keep on working out our salvation day by day; continually adding, as it were, a fresh grain to our good works, a fresh sheaf to our virtue, and growing in grace, going on from strength to strength, until at last we appear unto the God of gods in Zion; and, like a full shock of corn, we are gathered into God's garner.

If it is wrong to glean in another field, how much more wrong is it to neglect to glean in God's field! If it is wrong to stand all the day idle in the world's market-place, how much more so is it to be idle in Christ's vineyard! While our text is a solemn warning to those who are working outside the inclosure of Christ's field, it is also a warning equally solemn to those who, with all advantages and opportunities, with knowledge of the truth, are wilfully neglecting their work, are not gleaning, are not laying up treasure in heaven.

We need, therefore, earnestly to face the difficulties of the work we have to do. Our spiritual life and strength must increase gradually, just as in gleaning, the sheaf increases little by little, as each separate stalk of corn is picked up and added to it. There is no other way. Character, spiritual character, must be the result, not of one great effort, but of habits of life. It is not sufficient to win one battle, to make one great sacrifice, to do one heroic action for Christ. We must be gleaners, content day by day to do little duties for the love of Christ, to do them thoroughly for the glory of Christ; so that they may be laid up as treasures in heaven, and added to our sheaf of good works.

We are met together to-day to thank God for the blessings

of the harvest. If I have said little about this duty, it is because all the services of the day speak of this; and because I think it may not be amiss rather to try to send you away with the important and solemn lesson which the harvest teaches us.

Sermon CXX.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL.

(Foreign Missions.)

ROMANS I. 16.

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of GOD unto salvation to every one that believeth."

THE most wonderful life of missionary activity and missionary success which the world has ever seen is, without doubt, the life of S. Paul. When we attempt to count up the evangelical labours of his three missionary journeys only, we are filled with amazement at the amount of work S. Paul got through, the countries he traversed, and the missionary seed he sowed, in the brief space of some nine years. And we who are interested in missionary work to-day may well inquire into the causes of his wonderful zeal, of his extraordinary power, and of his striking missionary success.

I. Among these causes we may recognize:

1. His own thorough conversion, expressed in the simple but pregnant question which he addressed to his Master, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" This question implied absolute self-surrender; he gave himself without any conditions or limitations to Christ.

2. A long and careful training for his work. Some fourteen years seem to have elapsed between S. Paul's call and his first missionary journey, and this time was spent in preparing himself, in meditating on the truths of Christianity, and in receiving revelations directly from our Lord, till his whole mind was saturated with evangelical truth, and his soul was on fire with Divine love!

3. These two causes led up to a third, which, without doubt, was the mainspring of his missionary activity, and the explanation of his success. S. Paul was possessed by one dominant idea, an idea so magnificent that it still is, or certainly ought to be, the dominant principle of all missionary work. In S. Paul it was not absolutely original, for we trace its germ in the dying speech of the martyr S. Stephen (and doubtless that was its real source); but in the mighty mind of S. Paul it had been thought out in all its bearings and developed, until it attained proportions so colossal that it deserves to be considered as the greatest discovery of its day, or indeed of any age.

This idea was the universality of Christianity—that all men were salvable, and that God would have all men to be saved—that the Christian Religion was to be a Catholic Faith, a faith not for a nation, or a sect, or a class, but for every child of man!

To us this idea is so familiar that we are in danger, perhaps, of overlooking the fact that we owe it to the teaching of S. Paul. The first conception of Christianity, even among the apostles, seems to have been confined to a sort of reformation of Judaism, and through Judaism, perhaps, the conversion and redemption of other nations. S. Paul saw that no mere reformation of Judaism could accomplish the work that Christ came into the world to do; that the commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," was far wider in its scope than any reformation of Judaism could ever be. And as he pondered, on the one side, upon the Gospel of Christ,

and, on the other, upon the dire necessity and unspeakable misery of the human race at large, there gradually took possession of his whole being the conviction that every man had in him the capacity for salvation, and that the Gospel of Christ was the instrument by which he could be saved.

S. Paul was a man of one idea. It was the result of his temperament and mental constitution that he should turn all the powers of his intellect upon a subject which seemed to him worthy of engrossing his life, and that, having thought out this subject, it should pass from the sphere of mind to that of will, and become a moral conviction shaping and influencing his whole life.

Most men who have accomplished great things in the world, who have been benefactors to the human race, who have contributed ideas which have changed the course of human events, have been, like S. Paul, men of one idea. To it they have given themselves so unreservedly that in mastering it, it mastered them, and thenceforth dominated all their thoughts and actions.

Men of one idea are often called "narrow," and in a sense they doubtless are narrow—in the sense that the mighty waters of Niagara become narrow where they pass through the gorge in the rapids below the falls, before they enter the whirlpool. Narrow! Yes, for all the water of Lake Erie that passes over the falls is there compressed within narrow limits—though what it loses in width it gains in depth and mighty force as the swirling torrent sweeps through the rapids! These men are narrow, because human nature has its limits, and few men, if any, can be both broad and deep. If you want to make a small stream turn a large wheel so as to supply motive power to the machinery of a great mill, you have to confine that stream within a narrow channel, and then it effects great results. The same brook which half a mile above goes meandering through meadows in shallows only a few inches deep (but spreading

wide) accomplishes nothing until it becomes narrow in its channel, and its whole force is directed upon one point. So it is with the human mind. Men of one idea are narrow, but their lives are often a real force, and they leave behind them a legacy to their country and their age!

We may trace, therefore, the main cause of S. Paul's missionary success to the fact that he was dominated by one supreme idea, the need of, and capacity for, salvation in every human being! To put it in another way, we may say that S. Paul realized the value of the human soul as the object of God's love and because of its infinite possibilities for good or evil, not only in time but in eternity.

II. Dominated by this idea, S. Paul used means to carry it into action. And what were they?

1. His missionary journeys, when he went from place to place, through Cyprus, Pamphylia, Lycaonia, Galatia and Phrygia, into Europe, through Macedonia and Achaia, preaching the Gospel, and in every place founding Churches. But great as was S. Paul's activity, he saw that by this means he could only reach a comparatively small number of persons, for he could not go everywhere.

2. He conceived, therefore, the idea of writing a treatise on this subject—God's offer of salvation to all mankind, not only to the Jew, but also to the Gentile, accompanied by a telling argument for man's need of salvation, which he drew from the miserable degradation into which the heathen, even in the most prosperous and cultured cities of the Empire, had fallen, and from the terrible hypocrisy which was eating out the religious life of the Jew. This treatise was the Epistle to the Romans—S. Paul's "magnum opus," in which he sets before his readers his conception of Christianity.

3. In writing the Epistle to the Romans, S. Paul probably had in mind the fact that Rome was the fountain head from

which flowed forth streams of travel to every part of the then known world, and that if he could only impregnate Rome with Christianity, it would be carried by the streams of travel everywhere! It was a noble conception, and magnificently carried out in his Epistle.

III. In the opening chapter of the Epistle, S. Paul defines the Gospel as "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." What did he mean by the "power of God"? In the first and second chapters he draws a striking picture of the condition of the world in his day. First, he paints in darkest colours the state of the Gentile world; and doubtless he would have been accused of exaggerating the awful degradation of heathen society, did not the pages of Roman satirists bear witness to the prevalence of the same sins. Then he robs his own fellow-countrymen, the Jews, of their boast that they were better than the heathen, by showing that, though their vices might be different, they, too, fell under the law of sin!

Now, with his great heart beating in sympathy with the sorrows of his fellow-men, bleeding at their misery, S. Paul grasps the fact that at last a regenerative force has come into the world—a force so great that it can not only stem the murky torrent of sin which he has been describing, but can turn that torrent into the pure waters of a River of Life! This power he realized was the Gospel of Christ, the good news that all men were capable of salvation, if they would accept God's offer and use the means provided through the Incarnation and Passion of Jesus Christ, the Son of God! Feeling as he did, that the whole future of the human race depended upon the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ, he devoted his entire life, as we know, with marvellous success, to preaching, writing, and teaching the truths which Jesus had revealed to him.

IV. But this is also the basis of the Church's conception

of missionary work. Far-off lands, lying in darkness, great regions of our own country where the light of the Gospel burns but dimly, and at our very doors our own neighbours, needing the regenerating help of the grace of Christ—these make up the three divisions of missionary work to which I invite your contributions to-day—Foreign Missions, Domestic Missions and Diocesan Missions. I do not ask you to give only what you can spare, but that which is worthy of the great object of saving souls, that which will in some degree testify to your recognition of what God has done for you in giving you the full light and glorious privileges of His Church. Before you decide what you ought to give, I would have you ask yourself three questions:

1. Do I believe in the value of each soul as the object of God's love, and as capable of eternal happiness or misery?

2. Do I believe in the power of the Gospel to save the soul? That is, do I believe that Jesus Christ died for all men?

3. Do I recognize my responsibility for acting upon this belief? If I cannot, as S. Paul did, give myself to preach the Gospel, ought I not at least to give largely of my means to enable others to do for me that work?

THE END.

Printed by Curtis & Beamish, Ltd., Coventry.

Volumes of Sermons published by

Messrs. SKEFFINGTON & SON,

34, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.

By the Rev. Dr. ALFRED G. MORTIMER, author of *Helps to Meditation*. Third Thousand. Cr. 8vo, cloth, **3/6.**

LENTEN PREACHING. Three Courses of Sermons for Lent and Holy Week, viz.: 1st—Six Addresses on the Sunday Epistles for Lent. 2nd—Six Sermons on the Example of our Lord (1. In Temptation; 2. In Prayer; 3. In Work; 4. In Suffering; 5. In Friendship; 6. In Death). 3rd—Eight Entirely New Addresses on the Seven Last Words. These 20 Sermons form a complete round of Lenten Preaching.

"A series of Sermons, all of which are admirable."—*Church Times.*

By the same Author. Price **2/-**

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IN THE SEVEN LAST WORDS. A set of simple Addresses for Lent and the Three Hours' Service on the Words from the Cross. Second Edition.

"These plain Sermons are very admirable."—*Churchwoman.*

By Rev. H. J. WILMOT BUXTON. Cr. 8vo, cloth, price **5/-**

BIBLE OBJECT LESSONS. Thirty plain Sermons, including Four for Advent, also Christmas, Six for Lent, Easter, and many General Sermons. Among the titles of these original Sermons are:—The Ark of the Covenant—The Writing on the Wall—The Consecrated Cradle—Bitter Waters—Two Graves—The Fretting Moth—The Cup of Cold Water—Gardens of the Bible—Leaning on the Beloved, etc., etc.

By Rev. J. B. C. MURPHY. Cr. 8vo, cloth, price **5/-**

THE MILLS OF GOD. Twenty eight original Sermons, including Four for Advent, also Christmas, End of the Year, Six for Lent, also Good Friday, Easter Day, Whit Sunday, and many General Sermons.

Messrs. Skeffington are glad to be able to publish these ermons by Mr. Murphy, whose last volume was issued three years ago. Among the titles of these excellent and striking Sermons are:—The Mills of God Grind Slowly—The First Five Minutes After Death—Hasty Judgments—The End of Time—Dangerous Advice—The Ministry, the Motives, and the Isolation of Judas—The Return from Calvary—etc., etc.

Sermons for a Year by S. BARING GOULD.

THE SUNDAY ROUND. Sixty Sunday Village Sermons, being a plain village Sermon for each Sunday and some chief Festivals of the Christian Year, after the style and model of the same Author's First Series of "Village Preaching for a Year," which has been found so universally helpful and useful. The work is published in two vols., Cr. 8vo, elegant cloth, price **10/-**; or, Vol. I., Advent to Fifth Sunday after Easter, price **5/-**. Vol. II., Ascensiontide to the end of Trinity, etc, price **5/-**. Printed in large clear type, and brimful of original thoughts, ideas, and illustrations, which will furnish a mine of helpful material in the preparation of Sermons, whether written or extempore.

The Guardian says:—"From beginning to end these simple, forcible and intensely practical Sermons will give pleasure and instruction. They are written with scholarly freshness and vigour, and teem with homely illustrations appealing equally to the educated and the honest labourer."

By the Rev. CANON J. HAMMOND. Two vols., 10/-

THE BOYS AND GIRLS OF THE BIBLE. Two Volumes of Sermons. These Sermons will be found brimful of interest and instruction, and nearly all of them are specially adapted to interest and instruct mixed congregations, to whom most of them were primarily addressed. Two volumes, cloth, 10/-. Vol. I., Old Testament, 5/-. Vol. II., New Testament, 5/-.

"These Sermons deserve a wide welcome. They are direct, plain, even homely, but never fail in tact and dignity."—*Spectator.*

"Especially strong and delightful instructions."—*Church Review.*

A valuable Vol. of Sermon Notes by the Rev. GEORGE W. HERBERT, *Sometime Vicar of S. Peter's, Vauxhall.*

Second edition. Just out. Cr. 8vo. cloth, price 5/-

NOTES OF SERMONS FOR THE SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR, with Notes of 8 Mission Instructions, etc. A really excellent, comprehensive, and valuable volume of Sermon Notes for the whole year.

"These notes astonish us by their fulness, their methodical presentation of truth, their wealth of detail. Every one of them seems to contain enough material for three or four Sermons. Such a book is worth hundreds of the volumes of Sermons which pour from the press, and we commend it to the attention of the younger clergy."—*Church Times.*

By the Rev. F. St. JOHN CORBETT, M.A., *Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature*, Author of *Sermon Outlines*, etc. Cr. 8vo, cloth, price 5/- net.

A THOUSAND THINGS TO SAY IN SERMONS. This most helpful and valuable book of more than 350 pages, is one to materially facilitate the preparation of extempore and written Sermons. It contains no less than one hundred subjects, alphabetically arranged. Under each subject will be found a suggested Text and Ten Things to Say in the form of Illustrations, Anecdotes, and Quotations from standard works and illustrious preachers.

"Not only full of well-selected matter, but with some of the choicest bits of modern speakers and writers, the field of selection being both broad and long."—*Church Times.*

Sermons by the Rev. J. B. C. MURPHY.

Cr. 8vo, cloth, price 5/-

TILL THE NIGHT IS GONE. Thirty original and striking plain Sermons, including four for Advent, Christmas, six for Lent, Good Friday, Easter, and many General Sermons. The Publishers most cordially recommend this volume.

PLAIN-SPOKEN SERMONS. This valuable and successful volume consists of Twenty-eight Sermons, including Four for Advent, Christmas, also Sermons on Confirmation, on Alms-giving, on Gambling, etc. Third edition. Price 5/-.

"The object of the volume is to provide Addresses direct in expression, plain-spoken, and definite in teaching, and it is hoped that the Sermons will not be found to contain anything which may not be freely spoken before a mixed congregation, either in towns or villages."—*Extract from Preface.*

The Church Review says:—"Some of these Sermons are simply magnificent. We want such plain speaking on practical subjects from our pulpits. The subjects are good and well treated. We can recommend this book to the Clergy, and it deserves a wide circulation, for its tone is good and plain-spoken."

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL: being 34 plain Sermons, including four for Advent, Christmas, New Year, six for Lent, Good Friday, Easter, Harvest, Foreign Missions, School, and many General Sermons. Fourth edition. Just out. Cr. 8vo, 5/-.

HOMELY WORDS FOR LIFE'S WAYFARERS. Twenty-five plain Sermons, including four Sermons for Advent, also Christmas, Epiphany, End of the Year, All Saints' Day, Hospital Sunday, and General Sermons. Fifth edition. Cr. 8vo, 3/6.

A RECTOR IN THE MIDLANDS writes:—"These are perfect Sermons for villagers."

"Always fresh and forcible, and remarkable for clearness and simplicity of style."—*National Church.*

A 000 115 197 6